

The Battle *of* Plattsburg



By John M. Stahl



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The
Battle of Plattsburg;
A Study
in and of
The War of 1812. ✓

*To remind our troops of the actions of their brave
countrymen.—General Macomb, in his
Report of the Battle of
Plattsburg.*

✓
By
JOHN M. STAHL,
Ex-President of the Society of the War of 1812 in Illinois
Author of

*The Real Farmer; Just Stories; The Story
of Ed; The Invasion of Washington.*

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To
The Daughters of 1812,
The Society of the War of 1812,
and
All that Love Liberty and Democracy,
Honor the Brave,
and
Glory in the Star Spangled Banner.

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BY JOHN M. STAHL



1.

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN WRITTEN BECAUSE

In the War of 1812 both our soldiers and our sailors fought as well as soldiers and sailors have fought through any war in the history of the world.

Notwithstanding the apocryphal increment made by the centuries to the deeds of ancient warriors, or the enhancement of the valor of other warriors by the cunning of the writers of romance—rather often in the guise of history—no soldiers or sailors, of any people or any age, have fought better than the soldiers and sailors that have fought under the Star Spangled Banner (or its colonial prototypes) from the first day of the War of the Revolution to this day; and when the odds were not greatly against them, they have needed no messenger of defeat.

The War of 1812 does not furnish an exception. In fact, it might be contended that the battles of Plattsburg and New Orleans, in both of which our soldiers proved far more than a match, man for man, for Wellington's seasoned and best soldiers, showed the most skillful and resourceful fighting done on this continent; and inferior to none anywhere in the history of war in bravery or brilliancy of achievement.

Grievous injustice has been and is yet done the soldiers of the War of 1812. The ignorance of that war among the people of the United States is almost as incredible as it is discreditable.

Our people know a very few facts about that part of the battle of New Orleans that was fought on the left bank of the Mississippi; they know of Perry's "We have met the enemy and they are ours"; of the destruction of our Capital—and nearly all that we know about that is untrue and all that is untrue is a vile slander on our brave militia that fought surprisingly well; of Lawrence's "Don't give up the ship"; of the "disgraceful surrender" of Detroit by Hull—and very few indeed know that Hull fought well until the women and children in the fort were imminently threatened with the horrors of unrestrained Indian savagery; and that there was a battle or something of the sort at Baltimore, for it was during a battle or something of the sort in or near Baltimore that a fellow named Key wrote "The Star Spangled Banner".

The foregoing is more than many know, and is even more than many think that they know about the War of 1812; and some of it, as supposed to be known, is distorted and largely untrue, and unjust to our forces; while more than half of our people cannot even name some of the most important engagements of the War—battles of great importance because of their secondary results.

The adult citizen of the United States, though he may be a descendant of one of the valorous soldiers of the War of 1812, has less definite knowledge, and much less a just, accurate conception, of the events of that War and the achievements of those that fought it, than he has of some wars between foreign nations or of ancient times, of far less importance to the people directly involved or to mankind, and of yet less moment to us. Bancroft well termed the War of 1812 our "Second War of Independence". Yet while our children, in our public as well as our private schools, are taught well about the warriors of ancient Greece and Rome, they are taught almost, or quite, nothing about the War of 1812. Yet worse, what is taught is, in nearly every case, and particular, erroneous so far as it relates to the land engagements, and is unjust to, and fails far from giving due honor to, the brave soldiers of that War. Our soldiers of the War of 1812 fought with bravery at least equal to, and with intelligence and resource much above, that of the ancient soldiers our children are taught, in our schools, to admire; while what little notion our children get of our soldiers in the War of 1812 is that they almost—and on frequent occasions altogether—disgraced their flag and country!—a notion shamefully false, and monstrous in its injustice to the dead!

For several reasons it is unfortunate that for all too many years much of our public writing, including that labelled, and libelled, History, was the direct or

indirect product of New England. This section was early notable for its mental narrowness, its intolerance, its self-righteousness and assumption of superior wisdom—characteristics much more pronounced than the desire of its writers to know or state the truth about the War of 1812. Long before the beginning of that War the people of this section had begun vigorously and diligently to admit by proclamation that they had more wisdom and virtue than any one else. For this purpose, and other purposes, they acquired such facility with the pen, that their writings exceeded in quantity and far exceeded in noise those of the rest of the country. Because of quantity, and even more because of confident egotism, the publications, of various sorts, of New England exerted a great influence on public opinion. Because the War of 1812 was unpopular in New England, the writers of that section wrote that which was not true, and that which has given our people, especially since the Civil War, a wrong notion of our soldiers in the War of 1812. I say especially since the Civil War, because a cataclysm in national life, like our Civil War, allows a lie to live until it can pass for the truth; and, also, misrepresentation generally escapes scrutiny and is accepted as the truth when it has become tradition. Before the Civil War the large majority of our people yet had a correct knowledge of the War of 1812, and the conduct of its soldiers. They justly regarded that War as of equal importance with the War of the Revolution, and its sol-

diers as brave and praiseworthy. It is one of the ironies and cruelties of history—ironies and cruelties that mankind, because of its frailties, cannot escape—that the valorous deeds of the brave soldiers of the Civil War have contributed to the injustice done the equally brave soldiers of the War of 1812—a result for which the brave men of the Sixties are not in the least to blame, which they could never for a moment desire, and which they certainly deplore.

It is indeed a sad fact that there have been writers that struck at the dead—not enemies, but their own countrymen: soldiers that had given their lives bravely for their country. Surely it is among the most despicable of crimes to malign the character and belittle or deny the heroic achievements of those patriots that die on the field of battle with their faces to the foe. This crime is all the blacker because it is not only for the then present time, but continues through the years of the lives of the children and the children's children of the defamed soldiers—soldiers, in the War of 1812, whose patriotism was not bounded by State lines or whose bravery was not of the pitiable brand that will not fight until well paid.

As the result of this crime committed against the soldiers of the War of 1812, they, as brave and intelligent in warfare as any, are generally regarded as nearly always incompetent and very often cowardly; and our Second War of Independence, the equal in what it achieved to make and keep us a nation, to the War of

the Revolution or the Civil War, is generally regarded as insignificant in purpose and inconclusive and discreditable in results.

Certainly it is time that the truth about the War of 1812 should be known. Certainly it is time that the shameful injustice done our soldiers in the War of 1812 should be corrected. Certainly it is time that the great importance of that "Second War of Independence" should be realized. Certainly it is time, and now is the time, that the glory our soldiers of 1812 added to the Star Spangled Banner should enthuse and consecrate yet more the soldiers of this present war—soldiers that, we may be sure, will prove themselves worthy of the proud name of those that have fought—and fought well—in every war in which the United States has engaged.

Our antagonists of 1812 are our allies of today. We do not need to forget the past in order to fight with the British now to make democracy safe throughout the world. Because they are our allies in this great war it is not necessary that we regard the British even now as perfect. It would be despicable to conceal the facts of 1812. In a hundred years and more the world has changed. Certain things permitted in war a century past, are now not tolerated by people really civilized. And "War is hell"—the culmination of cruelty; it can not be made otherwise—if it were made otherwise it would no longer be war; few indeed are the wars of any duration that have not bred atro-

cities. A hundred years are many years too many for a nation such as this to harbor hate against an ancient foe. The British soldiers in the War of 1812 were as brave as Europe has ever produced. All the greater, therefore, the glory of, for example, our "rabble" of convalescents and militia successfully withstanding three times their number of the very flower of Wellington's army victorious in the Peninsula—the best soldiers, by long odds, that the Iron Duke ever commanded!

And because we know the facts about that, we may all the better fight today beside the soldiers of our old foe that has nation-wide resurrected the finest there was in chivalry and is fighting to save not itself alone, but our early friend, our beloved France.

This suggests another reason why we should inform ourselves about the War of 1812 and have the added enthusiasm and patriotism we will gain—the War of 1812 was fought by the United States as the friend of France. One of the criticisms of those responsible for that war, most frequently made, was that those that advocated and conducted the War were influenced by too great friendship for France—the friend without which the War of the Revolution would have failed. In all the weary days and months and years of the present war, not one intelligent word of criticism of France has been heard. It is the one nation that has, during this war, earned most of the world's esteem and love. It is the one nation that,

during this war, has had laid at its door the least of blame or fault. Let the War of 1812 remind us that though we were slow to put it into acts, our friendship for our earliest friend was not allowed to die! Let the War of 1812 animate us, though again we are slow to put it into acts, to prove to the world that we are not without gratitude and to do our utmost for our old ally and friend, to the bitter end—and glorious victory.

Out of the horrors and losses of war grow beauties and gains. A British king spoke of the French as "our sweet enemies". This present war has revealed such qualities and has been glorified by such deeds as Americans, French, British and Canadians can never forget. Before the present war—and far more now—the people of the United States and Canada were one nation more than they were separate peoples. Three thousand miles of boundary line has not a hostile foot! The political division that separates the people of the United States and Canada is of far less consequence than the many strong ties that bind them together. Very many Canadians have employment, business, domicil and welcome in the United States. Even greater numbers of the citizens of the United States have found a home and good neighbors and hearty welcome and the same ideas of government, in the Dominion of Canada. Surely French, British, Canadians and Americans know that it is silly, and worse, to recall with ill-will the events of a hundred years ago; and that it is even more silly to

assume that such events cannot be recalled without ill-will. We recall the events of the War of 1812 to honor the brave, victor or vanquished, friend or foe; and to gain inspiration and devotion to give, in peace or war, that full measure of patriotic citizenship that was so freely given by those that with little wordy proclamation, but many brave deeds, blazed the way of "Liberty and Democracy."

NOTE:—Several times the author has not balked at the repetition that promised to give adequate prominence to, and to direct proper attention to the importance of, certain events, too long forgotten by the American people.

2.

• AUTHORITIES

I have read diligently something more than two score of the many books about the War of 1812—and I fear that I must be almost the only person that has read some of these books for many years, for I find that those that consider themselves well informed about this War of 1812, did not know of these books. In some of these forgotten books I have found the best written and undoubtedly the fairest and most accurate accounts of the events of the War. For the most part, the sooner after the War the book was written, the more valuable it is as history. It is not true that the perspective of time gives an advantage in writing about stirring, vital events. The contrary is the case. Nor is it true that time lessens prejudice or modifies errors. Much oftener it allows prejudices to grow and errors to become better entrenched as truth. It is true that some that wrote shortly after the close of the War of 1812, were very much prejudiced. But they made no effort to hide that prejudice. On the contrary, they proclaimed their bias. They were frankly, openly more concerned to make out their case than to state only the facts and all the facts.

Hence, one can rather easily arrive at the truth: truth in their books; and truth outside of them, plainly indicated. One can rather easily detect the misstatements made through the prejudice then loudly acclaimed as patriotism. The task of getting the truth, from these books, is made not only easy, but humanly certain, when one has before him, let us say, one book on each side. Then all that he has to do is to guide his pen midway between the contending files of statements, or, at times, veer a little to one side or the other of the middle line as is plainly indicated by the heat of the heady writers.

Of those that have made books about the War of 1812, I like best of all the Canadian, Auchinleck, whose "History of the War between Great Britain and the United States", was published by MacLean and Co., of Toronto, Canada. I like Auchinleck because his bias, his prejudice, is so open, so frank, so honest, that it is refreshing and charming. He is so scrupulously, so boldly, biased that it reveals rather than camouflages the truth. Auchinleck begins by saying:

"We write, jealously observant of truth, so far as we can discern it; but, at the same time, we are not ashamed to confess that we write with emotion—as from the heart—and a heart, too, which to its last pulsation, will remain true, we hope, to the glorious British constitution."

The honest Auchinleck could not avoid the warning that he would write the truth only so far as he could discern it; and, in addition, he would depend on his emotions straight from his heart to discern the truth. Of course, we are not surprised that his pulsating fidelity to the glorious British constitution has led him often far from the truth when the truth was not complimentary to the British. But that has been the failing always of the subjects of the British Empire—a failing that some of the offspring or offshoots of the said Empire, let us confess, have inherited or taken with them.

It seems proper that right here we should proceed with our quotation from Auchinleck's introductory remarks. He proceeds in this frank fashion:

"Thus had Canada the credit of contributing her quota to the brilliant evidence which history supplies—in patriotic struggles and sacrifices such as the peasant-warfare of the Tyrol, and the conflagration of Moscow—that monarchy may evoke in its behalf a spirit of chivalrous devotion, and implant a depth of religious faith, equal even in the strength and vigor and courage of the moment, to democratic fervor, and infinitely superior to it in sustained effort and patient endurance."

If Auchinleck's style is at times somewhat turbid, this is fully compensated for by the clarity of his bias; and if sometimes his pen meanders and stumbles, this matters not because it does not dim his purpose to

make the best case possible for Canada and the glorious British constitution.

I can not forgive Auchinleck for one thing—his fidelity to the glorious British constitution is such that he not only excuses, he justifies, he almost glories in, the British use of the Indians in the War of 1812. This use led to hellish, all but unbelievable, and continued, atrocities. It makes a page as black as any in history. But in the life of the peoples of this New World, a century is so long, and we of the United States are so ready generously to forgive, that the Indian atrocities of the War of 1812 may well be counted as ancient history—to be read for information, and because necessary to do justice to our brave soldiers, but not to be allowed to nourish hate or revenge. Even more: one hundred years is too long to remember with hatred the deeds of any foe, *a fortiori* if, for a hundred years, that foe has been drawing closer and closer to us as a friend, and also is the one nation of the same language as ours. Even yet more, it is now our ally—our brave, honorable ally—in war. But, also, one hundred years is far too short for us to forget, much less belittle, the heroic deeds of our soldier-forefathers; and it is indeed a strange doctrine for a brave, free, patriotic people, that it must not, in any good spirit and fair words, recall the heroic deeds of its soldiers and sailors because to do that it must recall also the deeds of its former foes! He that

would withhold honor from our brave is mean enough and treasonable enough to dishonor our brave.

But if Canada and the glorious British constitution have their Auchinleck, we have our Ingersoll. Ingersoll soon attained such glory of bias that it was to combat and correct his misstatements that Auchinleck wrote—so says Auchinleck. Ingersoll's "History of the Second War between the United States of America and Great Britain" was published in three volumes in Philadelphia by Lea & Blanchard. Ingersoll was a member of the Congress of the United States. He took his seat at the opening of the first session of the 13th Congress—in May, 1813. He had unusually good opportunities to get "inside facts" about the War, and he had the ability and the assurance to take full advantage of these opportunities. He knew very many of the public men of the period of the War, and was very proud of this, especially of his having, as he at least believed, the friendship of many of the most prominent men of the South and the (old) Republican (anti-Federalist) party. He was a brilliant example of the snob. He was also a very strong partisan. Being a strong party man, and belonging to the party that favored the War, he emphatically approved of the War and all that pertained thereto. It should be remembered that in his time partisan rancor, prejudice, spirit, was very much greater than now, and in much higher repute. The bitter, narrow partisan rancor was even more expected

of a public man, and more surely and openly brought him public favor, than his attacks on intoxicants wherein his bravery and ambition were greater than his discretion and endurance.

Of the other authors that I have used for information, for comparison, to get at the truth partly hidden in the books of some by using the truth partly revealed in the others, I quote, with a very few exceptions, in addition to Auchinleck and Ingersoll, only Christie and Low.

"The Military and Naval Operations in the Canadas During the Late War with the United States", by Robert Christie, Esq., was published in Quebec immediately after the close of the War. According to competent authority (Mons. Jules de Wallenstein) Christie was an officer in the Canadian army. "General Maccomb", Wallenstein states, "remembered him as a polite young gentleman, with whom he had once an interview, during the War, on military business. The Canadian militia behaved generally, it seems, with great politeness towards the Americans, at that time very differently from the English officers."

"An Impartial and Correct History of the War between the United States of America and Great Britain," was published by John Low, at Shakespeare's Head, 17 Chatham St., New York, in 1816. Its impartiality and correctness is of such nature that it is a good foil for the impartiality and correctness of

Christie. Both were undoubtedly honest. Both sometimes erred. It was impossible to get all of the exact truth; and neither was perfect, or claimed to be, or wished to be.

3.

OPPOSITION TO THE WAR OF 1812

As already stated, there was much opposition to the War of 1812 in New England. Probably a majority of the people of New England did not disapprove of the War at any time. On more than one occasion the troops of the New England states fought exceedingly well. But the element of the New England population that opposed the War was certainly the most aggressive and made the most noise. The bitterest opposition to the War was in Massachusetts. At one time the dominant element in the population of Maryland voiced disapproval of the War. Some of the militia of Pennsylvania, and of other states, refused to go beyond the boundary of the United States. These same troops fought well, but they believed that they should not be sent, as militia, beyond the United States.

The vote on the Declaration of War in the House of Representatives was on June 5th, 1812. It was as follows:

State	Yeas	Nays
N. H.	3	2
Mass.	6	8
R. I.	0	2
Vt.	3	1
Conn.	0	7
N. Y.	3	11
N. J.	2	4
Pa.	16	2
Del.	0	1
Md.	6	3
Va.	14	5
N. C.	6	3
S. C.	8	0
Ga.	3	0
Ky.	5	0
Tenn.	3	0
Ohio	1	0
Total	79	49

The bill from the House was before the Senate from day to day until June 18, when it was passed by a vote of 19 ayes to 13 nays.

The vote in both the House and the Senate showed that the southern part of the United States generally favored the War and that the northern part generally opposed it. The vote in the House would best reflect the public opinion of each state, if for no other reason than that representation in the House was based on population. If we take the line between

New York and Pennsylvania as the dividing line, we will find that the vote on the Declaration of War from north of that line was 15 yeas to 31 nays—more than 2 to 1 against the War; while the vote from south of this line was 64 yeas to 18 nays—more than 3 to 1 in favor of the War.

The public attitude towards the War was based nearly altogether on partisan politics; commerce; slavery; free speech and free press; and the faults of the national administration.

The (old) Republican—anti-Federalist—party was dominant in the South. It was the party of Jefferson and Monroe, and by this time of Madison. It was the party of the national administration. The opposing party—the Federalist—was strong in the northern part of the country. To many of the Federalists, the very fact that another political party was in power at Washington and favored the War and was conducting the War, would have been, alone, sufficient reason to oppose the War.

But there was another reason, and to a good many northern people it was the more powerful reason: the measures that had been taken by the administrations of Jefferson and Madison—both Republican administrations and closely allied—had proved very hurtful to the most important business interests of New England and New York. Boston was, for the United States of that date, a very important port. Upon its foreign trade depended the prosperity of not only

Massachusetts, but of a yet larger part of New England. The Embargo and the Non-intercourse Act before the War, and then the War itself, were almost ruinous to the commerce of Massachusetts and other New England states. The fisheries also of some of these states were important, and were seriously injured by the War. Outside of New England, the ports of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore were the most important of the United States; and the injury to the business of the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland was responsible for some of the opposition to the War in those states—more in New York than in Pennsylvania or Maryland. There was truth in the indictment that those that “liked as well to carry on their trade with the neighboring British provinces as to be successful in the War” found in their lessened gains from business a reason to complain of “the costly military”, and to be in opposition to the War. In this War, as in others, the many suffered from lessened income and higher costs, while the few profited; and the attachment to the Union was yet so frail, that the many were sometimes disposed to put their loss above the objects of the War.

In the background was Slavery. While the slavery question did not become acute until 1821, when Missouri was admitted as a state, the purchase of Louisiana had awakened apprehensions in the North that had grown to a real force by 1812. The northern part of the country had not found slavery

profitable. It did not fit well into the industrial structure of the North. It died out in the North. On the contrary, it did fit well into the agriculture of the South, it was profitable there, and the majority of Southerners favored it. The anti-slavery element did not like the acquisition of Louisiana. The northern part of the United States was generally opposed to the addition to the United States of so much slave territory. This opposition to the Louisiana purchase was continued through the War and for years afterwards. The purchase was denounced as unconstitutional. It was contended that there was nothing in the constitution of the United States to authorize the annexation of Louisiana to the original Union, and that, therefore, the annexation might be lawfully resisted by both states and individuals—to resist it was patriotic if it was hurtful to the country. Both President Jefferson and John Adams conceded, when the purchase was made and also when Louisiana was annexed, that both the purchase and the annexation were, at the least, extra-constitutional. This was made the leading pretext for the opposition to the acquisition of Louisiana; but the increase of slave territory was feared by some and resented by others. A rather weighty reason for the opposition to the Administration and consequently the War, in the North, was closely allied to the foregoing—it was the growing political power of the South and the Republican—War—party. The success of the War of 1812 would add to

the power and fame of the party of Madison and Monroe and would greatly increase the political influence of the South. On the other hand, an important element in the South—many of the large slave-holders—did not desire the success of any military expedition into Canada. Before the War began it was boldly asserted in the United States that one important object of the War would be to annex Canada. Several pretentious military expeditions were openly planned to secure the annexation of Canada. More than one general from the United States, in grandiloquent proclamation, indicated plainly to the people of Canada that he came to make them citizens of the United States. A good many people in the United States and Great Britain, and even in Canada, thought the allegiance of many Canadians to Great Britain was very weak and that it would not be difficult to induce these Canadians to join our forces. The North hoped for the annexation of Canada. A very powerful element in the South feared and opposed this annexation of free territory, and which would also add greatly to the political influence of the North. Hence northern commanders and northern troops were in many ways hampered and hindered whenever they invaded Canada or attempted to do so. Apparently there was treachery and treason in the war and other departments of the national government—on more than one occasion, when an important movement was to be made against Canada, the British had copies of the orders

to our commanders, and knew the objectives and routes of our troops, before the orders reached our commanders or they knew the objectives of our troops and the routes of march. No wonder that although our troops were brave and fought well, they were at times made to taste the bitterness of defeat—bitterness because they knew that inefficiency or treachery at Washington or treason in state capitols, was responsible for defeat.

Ingersoll says that opposition to the War “comprehended most of the merchants for whose relief and at whose instance it was made, their dependents, the lawyers of the seaports, the traders and mechanics connected with navigation. Jefferson’s restrictive system, embargo, non-importation, non-intercourse, fell with severe force on eastern navigation interests, and soured that intolerant population. Their clergy, the champions of war against England in 1775, were bitter and uncompromising opponents of it in 1812.”

Of course there were notable exceptions. John Adams favored the War. He spoke for it and voted for it. He steadfastly rebuked those that opposed it.

Apparently it was hard for Ingersoll, as it was for others, to understand why it was that, as he puts it, “the most violent opposition to the War came from Massachusetts, particularly Boston, the cradle of the Revolution, where they seemed to become as strong in English attachments as they once were in aversions.” In 1812 Caleb Strong was elected governor

of Massachusetts on a peace platform. His election was plainly a victory for the opposition to the War. His opponent was Elbridge Gerry, an advocate of the War, and whose party was known as the war party. Governor Strong, in his first message to the Massachusetts legislature, denounced Madison's administration as subservient to France, and discredited the War loans. He is accused of having sown the seeds of the Hartford Convention, the next year. But he was not the only governor to disapprove of the War. Both the governor of Maryland and of Connecticut were outspoken and bitter in their denunciation. Many newspapers denounced those that subscribed to the War loans and in this "the pulpit of Boston vied with the press." Ingersoll quotes a New England clergyman as saying, "No peace will ever be made until the people say there shall be no war. If the rich men continue to furnish money, the War will continue till the mountains are wetted with blood, till every field in America is white with the bones of the people." That balderdash sounds familiar now, and doubtless it is as silly and false now as it was in 1812. So great was the intimidation attempted and actually accomplished in Massachusetts that certain Boston papers contained advertisements promising to conceal the names of those patriots that subscribed to the War loans!

Several states refused to allow their militia to be commanded by the officers of the national army, and

proposed that the people of the states refuse to pay taxes for the national treasury unless these taxes paid by the people of each state could be disbursed by the state officers for such purposes and in such amounts as these officers might determine. But more serious was the refusal to allow the state militia to go beyond the United States or even outside the state. "The constituted authorities of Massachusetts, legislature, governor and judiciary, unanimously resolved that their militia were not liable to be called out when the President of the United States thought necessary, and that when called out he could not depute his authority to command them. To these heresies was added the other extremely mischievous blow to the war, that militia cannot lawfully be marched beyond the frontiers of their own country."

All too frequently this proved disastrous to our armies, and inflicted defeat on our brave troops and frustrated carefully prepared plans. In speaking of this, Auchinleck says:

"We contend that the conduct of the greater part of the American militia on this occasion*, may be fairly adduced as an additional proof that the war was far from being as popular as one party in Congress would fain have represented it. It is notorious that many of the Pennsylvania militia refused to cross into Canada, while others returned, after having crossed

*The battle of Queenstown Heights, in which Brock was killed, and which should have been a most decisive victory for our forces.

the line, on constitutional pretexts.....The truth is, and American writers may blink it or explain it as they please, that the refusal to cross the border on the plea of its being unconstitutional, was one of the factious dogmas of the war, preached by the disaffected of Massachusetts, who imagined, doubtless, that the doctrine might be very convenient in the event of war in that region. The Kentuckians marched anywhere, they had no scruples. Why? Because the war was popular with them and they laughed at the idea that it was unconstitutional to cross a river or an ideal frontier, in the service of their country."

In another place, in speaking of the unsuccessful attempt of General Smyth, in November, 1812, on Canada, Auchinleck says: "The results may be stated to have beenadditional proofs, if such were required, to the American nation, that the war feeling was popular only with a small portion of the Union. The first demonstration of this feeling occurred in the resolutions passed in the legislature of Maryland a short time after General Smyth's defeat."

The resolutions named were passed, after long discussion, January 2, 1813. In the preamble to them it is most emphatically laid down that "War resorted to without just cause must inevitably provoke the Almighty Arbiter of the universe; produce boundless waste of blood and treasure; demoralise the habits of the people; give birth to standing armies and clothe a dominant faction with power, in addition to the

inclination to infringe the dearest privileges of free-men, to violate the constitution by implication and by new definitions of treason under the mask of law, and to subject to persecution, perhaps to punishment, citizens whose only crime was an opposition fairly, honestly, and constitutionally based on the system of the national administration."

This sounds very much like the pronouncements of New England. It is the only considerable opposition to the War that found such weighty expression from any part of the United States south of the line named early in this chapter.

Several strong resolutions were adopted. The third read as follows:

"Resolved, that the declaration of war against Great Britain by a small majority of the Congress of the United States, was unwise and unpolitic."

The fifth resolution was:

"Resolved, that the conduct of the governors of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, respecting the quota of militia demanded from them*, respectively, by the Secretary of War of the United States, was constitutional, and merits our deserved approbation."

It need only be pointed out that the constant, adroit and determined opposition to the War, when the bond of national union was yet weak and the states were jealous to assert their rights and were powerful

*And refused,

as compared with the national government, could not have otherwise than an almost paralyzing influence on the conduct of the War at critical times; that it must frequently be responsible for defeat; and that at all times it must have discouraged our troops. It would be reasonable to suppose that it weakened their morale and made them less than the very best of soldiers and sailors—but it did not.

The conclusion of the Preamble of the Maryland legislature, quoted above, merits very careful consideration. Possibly as potent an influence as any in creating and intensifying opposition to the War was the silly zeal of some public officials of small calibre, that, like such small-bore politicians of all periods, delighted in showing their authority. These officers were not in 1812, exceptions—they vented petty spite, took despicable personal revenge, and especially and most frequently then—as such officials do always—they acted to gratify their desire for publicity and notoriety and to lord it over others and magnify and show their authority, by suppressing a proper freedom of speech. Nothing else will quite so surely arouse the opposition and resentment of a brave and liberty-loving people as needlessly and by offensive manners to attempt the suppression of free speech and a free press. It is a sad fact that the first blood shed in the War of 1812 was American blood shed by Americans, and resulted from mob effort to suppress a free press in the city of Baltimore. The death of

prominent citizens and the injury of others lit a fire of opposition to the War of 1812 that spread and burned to the close of the War. In time of war and national danger, the things permissible are, of course, more limited than in times of peace and external security. It is extremely difficult to determine just where lies the line between proper freedom and improper license of speech and press. In times of peace the citizen may be given the benefit of the doubt. But in times of war, doubtful questions should be decided against the citizen and for the security of the nation. Yet even here the greatest care and most impartial consideration are necessary to the real public welfare. Border-line cases, and, in fact, all cases as far as possible, should be handled under the specific directions of, not subordinates of any degree, but of only the highest officials, who, presumably, have the greatest ability, intelligence and patriotism. And always, restrictions on free speech and a free press, should be placed in such manner as to give the least possible offense. It is well to consider also that attempted suppression of sedition is sometimes the most effective means to spread it; and that an intelligent people is inclined to lose respect for a government that is afraid to have the truth known and yet more if it fears to allow falsehoods to be published, for the history of all mankind shows that the quickest way to expose and defeat a lie is to allow the fullest publicity. When it is attempted to curb free speech, rumors and wild

tales and whispered insinuations multiply and grow and flourish best ; and they are always the favorite and most potent devices of the traitor. Also, by interfering with his mouthings it is easy to make a martyr of a demagogue, and secure for him far more of a hearing and give him far more influence, than he would have if those in authority ignored him. Silent contempt is, to a rather far removed point, the best weapon against fools or traitors, and the one they most dislike. There can be no other danger as great to free institutions and a free people as the assumption of the part of the judge by the sheriff or prosecuting attorney. This is more damnably treasonable than the words of any private citizen, for it is striking directly and indeed dangerously at the fundamental rights and liberties of a free people. For the prosecutor or sheriff to act as judge also, to act on suspicion, and to pronounce the citizen guilty, is a relic of the insupportable tyranny to end which thousands of our ancestors have shed their blood. A free people, like ours, will always, and properly, be jealous of free speech and a free press. Their opposition to any administration will be certainly aroused by attempts to suppress the utterances of anyone, when there is not clear, unmistakable need of such suppression, or when officials of petty minds and swelled ego are allowed to strut with their authority. We may be sure that the people will note and resent imprisonment or other punishment without due process of law, especially if the right of orderly

trial by jury in a regularly constituted court, is ignored; and the anger and distrust of the people will be all the greater, and in time will burst forth with all the more relentless force, if through fear it is not readily voiced. The national administration during the War of 1812 would have encountered less opposition, the War would have sooner reached the same conclusion, and lives and suffering would have been spared, had it not been for the attempts to suppress free speech and a free press by an unnecessarily offensive display of unlawful authority and the zeal of small minds. Unfortunately Madison was lacking in the sense of humor and the fine perception of the motives and spirit of the demagogue or the traitor, and of the people, shown by a Lincoln dealing with a Vallandigham.

But Madison was far removed from Lincoln. The war was prolonged and its progress made unsatisfactory by faults in the national administration and the faults in the national administration grew from the faults of Madison.

At times some one in this or that department of the national administration was guilty of that for which treason would be the easiest explanation, and the first to suggest itself; but for which inefficiency, and that stubborn exalted egotism which comes to believe in the perfection of self and satellites, are doubtless the true explanation. To illustrate, on more than one occasion information of vital importance,

and which should have been carefully guarded from the enemy, was carefully conveyed to them; and not only this, care was taken to convey it to them by the most expeditious and certain means, whereas our own commanders, who should have had this information with certainty and at the earliest moment, were kept in ignorance until slow and circuitous and almost chance means, had given them the information. This alone was responsible for more than one failure when with commonsense and ordinary intelligence in the offending office of the national administration, or absolute inaction there, our forces would doubtless have been successful. All too often officials of the national administration apparently thought the Canadians and Britishers as dense and inefficient as themselves, and held from our forces, that should have had it, and from the nation, that it would have reassured, information that the enemy already had; the only grounds for the action of our officials being that they did not think that the enemy had this information or that they could get it if these officials did not communicate it to our own commanders or people. At times the weakness and inefficiency of the national administration pressed close to the incredible; and the contempt for the national government felt in certain state capitals and among many of our people, and only too well maintained by the conduct of the national administration, led to only partial responses to the call of the secretary of war on states to furnish men and supplies.

Madison was a man of irreproachable character. He was a patriot. He was a man of profound thought and great scholarship. He had been a Federalist. He wrote twenty-nine of the eighty-five numbers of "The Federalist"—Jay contributed only five numbers, and Hamilton the rest. When he graduated from Princeton he remained a year longer to study Hebrew. He was justly renowned as a thinker and writer on government; but his liking for theology was fully as strong as for the science of government, and had he been born at a different time he would probably have been a professor of theology and then president of Princeton, or some other collège, in which he would have been also professor of Hebrew or theology or government. He was a man of very great ability. That the national constitution was accepted by the states was probably due more to him than to any one else. He broke with old friends and had bitter enemies, but his honesty or virtue was never questioned. Naturally enough, the dominant element in his administration was, in its own estimation, at least, scholastic and philosophical; and it had the characteristics of the soi-disant scholarly "statesman" of the time—and later dates—who was pleased not to be "practical." There was indeed one prominent exception—the commonsense, positive, bold Monroe. If, before the destruction of the capitol he had been secretary of war instead of secretary of state, the course of the war would have been different. Madison had

argued for universal military training and for a standing army and a navy sufficient for defense. He did this when eloquently endeavoring to secure the adoption of the national constitution. This required real moral courage, for the people of that time greatly feared, and were bitterly opposed to, a standing army. "How could a readiness for war in time of peace be safely prohibited, unless we could prohibit, in like manner, the preparations and establishments of every hostile nation?" he asked in *The Federalist*. "If", he continued, "one nation maintains constantly a disciplined army, ready for the service of ambition or revenge, it obliges the most pacific nations, who may be within the reach of its enterprises, to take corresponding precautions.....The veteran legions of Rome were an overmatch for the undisciplined valor of all other nations, and rendered her mistress of the world."

That was written in 1788. Immediately following what has just been quoted he wrote: "Not the less true is it that the liberties of Rome proved the final victim of her military triumphs; and that the liberties of Europe, as far as they ever existed, have, with few exceptions, been the price of her military establishments. A standing force, therefore, is dangerous".

This view grew more and more in his mind, to the exclusion of the need of military preparedness for national defense. His genius was for scholarship and theology and literature and philosophy rather than

practical statesmanship and wise administration. He was by nature antagonistic to war, to force. Jefferson, his warmest admirer and friend, said of him that his nature and method were "soothing always the feelings of his adversaries by civilities and softness of expression". He was, in early life, exceedingly diffident; almost timid. Few have reached higher planes of thought or spiritual or patriotic expression; but, with Britain and France not only at war already involving or threatening to involve all nations that could really fight, he was content with embargo and "non-intercourse" and beautifully worded remonstrances, and no effective effort was made to get, equip and train soldiers or to build up a navy. "What has brought on other nations those immense debts," he wrote, "under the pressure of which many of them labor? Not the expenses of their government, but war". He was opposed to war. He entered into war reluctantly. Doubtless he never forgot that in allying himself with the war party he had parted from his early political friends—the Federalists. Doubtless his heart was not in the war; but he was by birth of the section that favored the war, and he went with his section. And though his heart had been in the war, his administration would probably not have been more successful in the prosecution of the war. He became stubbornly deaf to advice.

Inevitably a President is pressed around by subtly intrusive selfish or silly sychophants who know the

power of flattery. A President is continually told, if he will listen to it, if he will not positively refuse to listen to it—and unfortunately it is not characteristic of human beings to dread “praise, not blame”—that he is the greatest statesman and ablest administrator that ever occupied his exalted position; and unless he is quite exceptional, he comes to believe some or much of this and to less or greater degree refuses to listen to criticism, resents advice, constantly seeks greater power, is more and more in sympathy with men and measures that take from the liberties of the people, and undertakes more and more the direction of that for the proper direction of which he lacks ability or energy, or both. He is content with inefficient officials and aids, for, he having chosen them, they must be the best that can be had! The War of 1812 was prolonged and its conclusion was unsatisfactory, lives were sacrificed, hardships were put upon the people, because the national administration attempted what was, for it, impossible; would not supplant the inefficient of men and methods with the efficient; and at times was successful in accomplishing the astoundingly inopportune and inadvisable, if not actually criminal.

Yet time has been kinder to Madison than it has been to his critics, and for this we may all well be content. It has preserved a remembrance of his good qualities rather than of his shortcomings. Before he became President, even before he became Jefferson's Secretary of State, he had given to his country a vast

service that required the highest and greatest and most varied of talents coupled with true patriotism and prodigious industry. If he had never been President he would nevertheless merit very nearly as much praise and gratitude from the American people as any one in all our history. Possibly the Presidency took from his high fame rather than added to it. And it is certain that of those that criticised him during the War, a good many would better have kept silent. Some there were who criticised with wisdom and from patriotic motives; and it would have been better for Madison and the country he loved if he had listened to these critics. He was not perfect. He was ill-suited to be a war President. But he was patriotic. So were some of his critics. But not all—not some of the loudest, that sought most to hector and hinder.

4.

THE HARTFORD CONVENTION

New England continued in loud-mouthed opposition to the War, and the resolutions of the Maryland legislature were mild compared with the speech made the 15th of the same month by Mr. Josiah Quincy, of Massachusetts, in the House of Representatives. Auchinleck makes extracts from this speech; and referring to them, and others of like tenor, he says:

"These extracts sufficiently establish our position, to ascertain that the War of 1812 was considered by the majority of the citizens of the United States as unnecessary, impolitic, and, with reference to the interests of the country, almost suicidal. These and subsequent debates almost justify the opinion entertained by some writers of that day, who did not hesitate to declare that a continuance of the War must lead to a disruption of the Union."

This danger of the disruption of the Union may never have been serious. The writer of this thinks that Lincoln's "plain people" of that time were sincerely devoted to the Union, and that while many dis-

approved of the war, not many would have followed the noisy politicians and agitators had they attempted to lead as far as the dissolution of the Union.

The verbal opposition to the war culminated in what is known as the "Hartford Convention", because held in Hartford, Connecticut.

The genesis of this convention is in doubt. It was probably years before 1812. John Quincy Adams asserted that during the first session of Congress after the Louisiana purchase—sometime in the spring of 1804—he was told by Senator Uriah Tracy of Connecticut, or another member of Congress, and probably both—but of that he was not sure—of a project of the Federalist members of Congress from New England to establish a separate government. The territory of this separate government was to be all of New England, and also New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania if this were found practicable. Unfortunately Mr. Adams did not make his statements about this project until Senator Tracy and the other member of Congress were dead. Few would dispute Mr. Adams' truthfulness, yet more than a few doubted the correctness of his assertions. However, in 1828 Hon. William Plumer, a senator from New Hampshire in 1803-4, and afterwards governor of that State, informed Mr. Adams that he was aware of the projected disunion in 1803-4. In fact, he allowed it to be understood that he had participated in the discussion and planning. A preliminary meeting was to have been

held in Boston in the autumn of 1804, but this was abandoned because of the death of Hamilton in June of that year. During the 1804-5 session of Congress, Mr. Plumer was told, he said, by one of the conspirators, that a meeting to consider ways and means to form a separate government for the Northern States, to include Pennsylvania, would be held notwithstanding Hamilton's death. Mr. Plumer was assured that the secession project had not been and would not be abandoned. But so far as Mr. Plumer knew, the project slept until 1808-9, when because of opposition to the embargo and non-intercourse acts, it was revived, but did not get beyond the stage of informal discussion. When it was revived during the war of 1812, Mr. Plumer, according to his own statements, opposed it energetically, both privately and publicly.

It is quite probable that a great deal of the talk Senator Plumer heard was rather academic. Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and Adams, all publicly acknowledged that the incorporation of foreign territory into the United States was not provided for in the Constitution. The purchase of Louisiana gave opportunity for much constitutional discussion by those that wished to oppose Jefferson because of party affiliation or sectional location. When the Embargo was laid, able and conscientious jurists were certain that an indefinite embargo was extra-constitutional, if not actually unconstitutional. But there are times when the necessities of a nation may justify action beyond writ-

ten laws or a written constitution. In time of war nice distinctions of law can not be regarded as it may be proper to regard them in time of peace. It was not long after the close of the War of 1812 that public opinion was well nigh unanimous that neither the acquisition of Louisiana nor the Embargo was justification—not even an excuse—for any state having, during the crisis and stress of war, refused the men or money indispensable to the successful prosecution of the War. It may be well for some to remember at this time that when the nation is at war is a poor time to quibble over legal technicalities or to be slack in any endeavor to bring the war to a victorious end.

Massachusetts has been most blamed for the Hartford Convention, in which the opposition to the war and especially the national administration, found expression that approached nearest to disunion. This may be unjust. Otis declared that Rhode Island made the first advances—to Massachusetts and Connecticut. It is certain that other New England States had done their share to embarrass the conduct of the war and to hinder its successful prosecution. On one occasion the governor of Vermont actually ordered back the willing militia, much more patriotic than the politicians of the State. As a time-server he was wiser than Governor Gilmer, of New Hampshire, who was defeated for re-election because he honored the President's requisition for troops. In August, 1812, at its first session after Congress declared war, the Con-

necticut legislature enacted a law that the volunteers of the State should not be liable for any military duty except the call of the governor for the defense of the State; that on no occasion were they to be subject to any military duty outside the State; and that they could be commanded by only their own officers.

It will be seen from what has already been written in this and the preceding chapter that the Hartford Convention and its action were the logical outcome of what had been begun in 1804 and continued in Massachusetts and other New England States, and yet other States.

In February, 1814, a committee of the Massachusetts legislature declared that the Constitution of the United States had been violated by the federal government, and the committee suggested the appointment of delegates to meet delegates appointed by other States to devise "proper measures to procure the united efforts of the commercial states to obtain such amendments or explanations of the Constitution as will secure them from future evils." The New England states claimed during 1814 that the defense of their coasts had been neglected by the federal government. So far as this was true it applied to the rest of the Atlantic and to the Gulf coast. The federal government could not protect all of the long coast line. It lacked the means to do so. It could not get the means necessary to do so. While some of the New England coast had been attacked and devastated, this

was true of some of the coast farther south, and of some of the Gulf coast. However, in October, 1814, another committee of the Massachusetts legislature reported that either the state must submit to the British, which could not be considered, or appropriate to the defense of its own people the revenues it had been contributing for defense to the national government. This committee also recommended a convention of the New England states to take action necessary to defend and to protect their interests. This report of the committee was adopted by the Massachusetts legislature by a vote of more than three to one. A circular letter was sent to the other New England States, calling on them to appoint delegates to meet in a convention. In response to this the legislatures of Connecticut and Rhode Island appointed delegates. Two delegates came to the convention from New Hampshire and one from Vermont, but they were not appointed by the State. The convention met at Hartford, Connecticut, December 15th, 1814. After being in secret session for twenty days, the convention addressed a manifesto to the States having delegates present. This manifesto was moderate in tone and expressed a patriotic devotion to the United States. It declared, however, that the federal constitution had been disregarded by the national administration in its claims of power over the militia; in the increase of the regular army by conscription; and in authorizing the enlistment of minors without the consent of their parents or

guardians. It recommended—and it was for this that the convention was most condemned—that the state legislatures adopt whatever measures might be necessary effectually to protect the citizens of the States from the operation of those acts of congress that subjected the militia and others to forcible draft, or conscription, etc., not authorized by the Constitution of the United States. It was easy to construe this, and especially because of the language employed, as a recommendation of forcible opposition, by the New England States, to the authority of the national government. The convention also proposed several amendments to the Constitution of the United States, of which the most significant were that representation in the national House of Representatives be based on **free** population and that a **two-thirds** vote of congress be required to admit a state into the Union or declare war. Among the proposed amendments was one that embargoes be limited to sixty days; that each state should expend the national revenues collected from it; and that its militia should not be sent beyond its borders or be commanded by other than the militia's own (state) officers.

The national administration professed to see much danger in the Hartford convention and to fear that it might result in open rebellion against the federal authority; and it stationed a regiment of the regular army at Hartford during the convention. But the officer commanding this regiment reported that he

found no occasion to make use of his troops in any way.

The war came to an end almost as soon as the Hartford convention adjourned and interest in the questions that had brought the convention into existence rapidly waned. The bitter partisan rancor of Madison's administration was followed during Monroe's administration—"the era of good feeling"—by the minimum of partisan feeling in our history. However, there remained such memory of the Hartford convention that those prominent in it could never attain political preferment, not even in Massachusetts.

Space has been given to the opposition to the War because unless we have knowledge and just appreciation of this opposition, we cannot render fair judgment on our soldiers and sailors in that war. If our soldiers failed to achieve victory it was far more due to the effects of this opposition than it was to the incompetency of officers or rawness of the men, and it was never due to cowardice. Among the effects of that opposition were:

Insufficient forces—states called on for so many militia neglected to comply or sent only a part of the number asked for.

Lack of equipment and munitions—the states were supposed to supply certain equipment and munitions, and neglected to do so; and, also, the national loans and revenue measures were so opposed and hindered that the national government lacked necessary funds for equipment and munitions.

There would have been little enough unity of action at best among the States, but the opposition to the war reduced this unity of action until at times it almost ceased to exist at all.

The opposition to the War increased the distrust and jealousy among the commanding officers.

Inevitably this opposition interfered with discipline and encouraged insubordination. Sedition was openly preached among the troops. Many of the troops were led to believe that the war was unnecessary, if not a crime.

Finally, the defiant attitude of some of the States increased the vacillation, weakness, hesitancy and tardiness of the national administration.

The opposition to the War, and the conditions that resulted from that opposition, would have destroyed the morale of ordinary troops.

But it did not destroy the morale of our soldiers or sailors, and although inferior in numbers, often almost without military training, and lacking woefully in munitions and supplies, and hindered and thwarted in many ways by the incompetent, self-conceited and stubborn federal officials, they nevertheless fought valiantly against not only the white British soldiers, but the merciless, treacherous red soldiers; and when the odds were not very greatly against them, defeated their foes, white and red—and at Plattsburg and New Orleans defeated armies that far outnumbered them and were the flower of Wellington's veteran troops.

5.

WHY PLATTSBURG?

To give an account of all, or of several, of the battles of our Second War of Independence, would make a book too big for these busy, stirring times, when the highest considerations call for the utmost of action. True, the call is also for the recital of facts that will stir to the utmost of patriotic endeavor, but it is equally insistent that the recital be no longer than will accomplish the desired end. When we have come to understand the discouragements and obstacles encountered by our soldiers and sailors in the War of 1812, and view their achievements in the light of that understanding, we are certainly dull and lethargic and poor citizens of the United States indeed, if the facts of even one notable battle of that War do not stir us mightily to that supreme effort that may rightfully be expected of every inheritor, whether by blood or adoption, of the Liberty and Democracy firmly established by this Second War of Independence.

It is extremely difficult for anyone now to understand how true it is that the War of 1812 was our Sec-

ond War of Independence; that up to 1812 the bonds that held the States together in the Union were so weak, and were so lightly regarded by the States, that they were scarcely bonds at all; and that because of the doubtful attitude toward the Union that yet prevailed and the distrust of the national government as a national government and therefore the indecision and weakness of its administration, the United States could not assert its independence abroad and as against foreign nations, nor could it effectively assert its independence at home and above and over the States. There was not that pride of country, that affection for and devotion to the Flag, that grew up in later years and that began its real growth during this War. Half of the public men did not favor such a form of national government as we had, and did not believe that our national government would endure; and among the others were many that had no real affection for the national government and were by no means certain that it, yet an experiment, would prove successful. The United States was yet "**these** United States"—yet plural; the United States were not yet a Nation, "one and indivisible", but only a league, a confederation, and in every State there were many that believed that a State had the right to withdraw from this league whenever it so desired. The means of transportation and communication were such that a hundred miles made two groups far more separate peoples than three thousand miles would make them today.

Each group was nearly altogether influenced by only its own particular interests, and had little regard for the interests of the other groups or for the national interests. Each State was jealous of its rights and interests, cared little for the rights and interests of others, and all distrusted and disparaged the national government. Hence both at home and abroad the United States suffered many ills because it was yet only a league, only an aggregation in which each part stood out more prominently than the whole, in which the centrifugal force was yet almost as strong as the weak bands that bound the States together. It required the War of 1812 to make **these** United States into the United States*; to weld the States into a close, real Union; to make the federal government over the States and beyond them One National government; and to **fuse** the different groups of our people, separated in spirit and sentiment and by material interests as well as by real barriers of distance, into one Nation.

It is this condition that existed prior to the War of 1812 and which lessened very much during that

*Those that yet speak or write of **these** United States are guilty of being a hundred years "behind the times", behind the events of their own country. They yet cling to an expression proper enough before the War of 1812, but made improper and untrue by the events of that war and facts of great moment in our subsequent history. "These United States" used now is the expression of those that have not learned the most important and the most firmly established fact in our history.

War, yet persisted for years afterwards, that gave vital significance to the battle of Plattsburg, and made it one of the four or five most important battles in our history.

This is the first reason why, having to choose among the battles of the War of 1812, the Battle of Plattsburg was selected.

Great Britain fought the battle of New Orleans because that power believed that if it won that battle it would as well win all of the Louisiana sold by France to the United States, and even more—that it would divide the United States by the Mississippi and control the mouth of that river; that it would make all the vast domain west of that river a part of the British Kingdom. The papers of Lord Castlereagh make its hopes and design plain. For that reason, with the army sent to Louisiana were sent all the officers of a permanent civil government. That most charming writer about the War of 1812, "A Subaltern in America", says that the expedition to New Orleans was to effect "a permanent conquest". It is official history, as revealed by the Bathurst papers (State Papers office, London) that the civil government staff that the Packenham expedition brought to what was significantly called, in the official papers, the "province" of Louisiana, consisted of "a lieutenant-governor; a collector of customs; an attorney-general; an admiralty judge; a secretary for the colony; and a superintendent of indian affairs". Great Britain fully expected to

make all west of the Mississippi a part of the British Kingdom; and it knew that if it could divide the United States by the Mississippi, and hold Canada, before many years it could conquer and return to the British Kingdom all of the United States.

The same idea, combined with one of the great rules of strategy, was back of the battle of Plattsburg. The British believed—and had indeed good grounds for so believing—that if they won at Plattsburg, defeating both the fleet on Lake Champlain and the land forces, they could divide as regards military operations, New England and at least part of New York from the rest of the United States. They believed that they would be aided in winning the battle at Plattsburg by the weakness of the federal authority and the strong state feeling, which had thus far in the War prevented that prompt assembling of forces in sufficient number, and that furnishing of equipment and supplies, which were essential to the successful prosecution of the War by the Americans. They knew that this, plus sectional jealousies and the envy of commanders, had reduced the land forces of the United States at Plattsburg to a handful of convalescents, and that the United States fleet was not ready for battle. But they counted on the weak federal authority and the strong state feeling not only to aid them in this way in their military operations and make easy the movements dictated by strategy, but to aid them also in the political result that would be yet more important—the political and

permanent separation of New England and possibly New York from the United States and the annexation of this territory to Canada or its erection into another province. In either case, this part of the United States would be a part of the British Kingdom; and this accomplished, and British forts erected at strategic points and British troops brought to Canada as they could be transported and thoroughly equipped and supplied, the subjugation of the rest of the United States and its reincorporation into the British Kingdom would be easy.

The strategy of the British—to separate one part of the territory and of the forces of the foe from the other, and thus be able to strike in succession with superior forces—has been the strategy of the greatest commanders from Caesar to the present war. It had been pounded through the thick skulls into the slow brains of the British by the master of it—Bonaparte. It was his favorite strategy from Montenotte to Ligny. Why did he ignore it immediately after Ligny—June 18, 1815? There have been various answers. The answer must be uncertain; but the result was certain—Waterloo. It was this strategy of Grant's that divided the Confederacy and its forces by the Mississippi, and again by the March to the Sea. It was the strategy often employed, and successfully, by Lee—and so well and tersely defined by his ablest lieutenant, if not, indeed, the ablest commander of the Civil War*, as "getting there fust with the mostest

*"Stonewall" Jackson.

men". Defying it, or ignoring it, has often brought disaster. Jackson's battery and troops on the right bank of the Mississippi did effective service before the day of the battle of New Orleans. But they could have been placed on the left bank to do effective work; and if Jackson had not divided his forces by the broad river, he would not have been humiliated by the defeat on the right bank, and he would have been able to compel the surrender of the entire British army surviving that day of awful slaughter. Instead of abusing and condemning the Kentucky and Louisiana militia, "armed with nothing better than old Spanish escopetas," (yet nevertheless inflicted a loss of 108 on the superior force opposed to them) Jackson should have placed his curses on his positively and inexcusably bad strategy.

But to return to the British strategy of the Plattsburg campaign. If the British had been the victors in the battle of Plattsburg, they could have cut the United States in two along the line of the Hudson, and, later, could have added to New England all of New York except, possibly, the western part; and, further, the expressed attitude of New England toward the War and toward the national government gave the British good reason to believe that not only would the military opposition to British plans be weak, but that the opposition to political reunion with Great Britain could rather easily be overcome. Hence, when Prevost, the commander-in-chief of the expedi-

tion, was about to enter the United States, he (to use the language of Rossiter Johnson in his "History of the War of 1812-15") in accordance with this purpose, issued a proclamation to the inhabitants calling upon them to renounce allegiance to the United States, and to renew their allegiance to Great Britain. The writer of this is certain that as regards the feeling of the people of New England and New York, the British were mistaken, but only because those in New England that made themselves heard were not the majority. Undoubtedly four-fifths of the people of New England were sincerely attached to the Union, and they yet hated Great Britain fiercely; but they were only the unheard common people.

It will be seen that in its objectives the battle of Plattsburg was the most important of the War of 1812—more important than even the battle of New Orleans. Auchinleck says of the Plattsburg expedition that it was the "most important expedition undertaken during the three years war."

Another reason for selecting the battle of Plattsburg is that in it both the naval and the land forces participated and at the same time. In this it is unique—in no other real battle in our history have the full strength of both the land and water forces so participated at the same time. Out of the little knowledge of the War of 1812 among the people of the United States—and that knowledge bound up with ten parts of error to one part of truth—has come the general

notion that in that War our sailors fought better than our soldiers. This error can be laid at the door of the New England writers spoken of in an earlier chapter. As New England was largely maritime as compared with the rest of the country, and New England ports were the most important naval bases and New England sailors manned many of our ships, New England writers magnified and glorified naval victories while belittling or misrepresenting land engagements. New England troops were not conspicuous in land battles. For this the soldiers—or, rather, the citizenry that gladly would have been real soldiers—were not so much at fault as the prominent men, the state officers, of the New England states. At Plattsburg our sailors fought well indeed as they have always fought, for they defeated superior forces of ships, guns and men—and many of the men were the best, seasoned sailors of the British navy. At Plattsburg our soldiers fought well, for they defeated several times their number, and their opponents were the best soldiers Great Britain had. Our soldiers and sailors fought in truth side by side; and the victory of the sailors aided the soldiers much indeed to win their victory. Undoubtedly the defeat of our sailors would have brought defeat to our soldiers. But the triumph of our sailors would have been balanced by the defeat of our soldiers. The battle of Plattsburg is the best and most brilliant example in our history, of what can be accomplished by our sailors and soldiers when they co-operate in their fight-

ing, when they strike at the same time, when they co-ordinate their efforts; have no jealousy but to be jealous, not one of the other, but one for the other; and fight, above all else, for victory, liberty and country. Because of this glorious feature, not less than its other peculiar circumstances, the battle of Plattsburg should be an inspiration as well as a reason for joint, co-ordinated effort by our army and navy when possible—if not in the same battle, at least in the same effort.

The battle of Plattsburg has been selected because so much of the victory was due to raw, untrained volunteers and militia—only a minority of those engaged had ever been in a battle before—pitted against men whose life business it was to be soldiers, who had been in many battles under Wellington and who in Spain, Portugal and France, from Oporto to Toulouse, had become past-master fighters, inured to hardships and defeat, yet accustomed to victory. Please understand that because at Plattsburg untrained volunteers and militia fought well against trained, seasoned troops, is not, in the humble opinion of the writer, an argument against training soldiers, or any argument that soldiers while yet untrained are as good soldiers as when trained. In fact, the writer believes in universal military service, and a service that is a real, thorough training; and the more he studies the War of 1812 and other wars, and the history of free peoples, the more he is in favor of a real,

universal military service. But if wars have demonstrated that the training of soldiers is important, and an important preparation for victory, they have equally demonstrated that the morale of the soldiers is as important as their training and that it is independent of their training; and that in that morale, that spirit, that is so important, the raw volunteers, fighting for an ideal, for liberty and fireside, are far superior to the men that fight for pay, as a business, and have no firesides to defend. History further shows that training men into soldiers, while adding something to the man, very often takes something out of him; so that while an efficiency that is not a part of him is added to him as a garment put on or an implement in the hand, something that is his very self, a part of his spirit or soul, is taken from him or covered up or dulled into inaction. A soldier may actually be too well trained to be the best soldier. He may become altogether too much of an automaton, lacking in quick thinking and initiative as well as in spirit and sentiment. It is granted that what some military men tell us is true—that a soldier must be trained until he acts often without thinking; but he is overtrained, and made less valuable as a soldier, if he is trained until he is incapable of bold, intelligent, resourceful, independent thinking and acting. Making a man so much of a soldier that he is more of a soldier than he is a man, is a soldier rather than a lover of some woman, and perhaps of children that call him father, and of a

home and a country: that training takes the soldier past the point of greatest efficiency. We should have trained soldiers. Every youth in the United States should have real military training—for his own good, as an individual, and for that adequate defense of the nation that will always be the best guarantee of peace. But always we should remember that our own history, and the history of other nations, show that mere soldiers, though trained for years by a Wellington, cannot defeat even a less number of patriots who fight willingly, though awkwardly, for some such ideal conception, such birth of the exalted spirit, as we verbally embody in the word Liberty or Country or Flag or Home or Family. Our decline and fall will begin, not because of raw troops, but when we have lost that patriotic fervor that has animated our untrained volunteers on many fields of battle and has driven them on to victory—that fervor, that morale, to which must be added training to make the best soldiers, but without which training is of little use—that morale which coupled with adequate training and equipment, is invincible.

It is proper that one more reason be given for the selection of Plattsburg: with the exception of the engagements of the expedition to the Chesapeake, Plattsburg is the only engagement of any real consequence in the War of 1812 in which the English did not use Indians. Of that War Bladensburg is the only real battle in which the British were victorious in

which their victory was not due to their Indian warriors—if, indeed, a battle can be called a victory when the victorious (?) army must slink away in the darkness of the night and leave its wounded, including officers, in the hands of the defeated!* At times the British were defeated notwithstanding their use of Indians, and in the battle of New Orleans they employed not only red men, but fifteen hundred blacks.

*Says "A Subaltern in America":

"For our part, it was not without some difficulty that we succeeded in bringing our stragglers together, whilst daylight lastedIn the meanwhile, the officers of the different corps had been directed in a whisper to make ready for falling back as soon as darkness should set in. From the men, however, the thing was kept profoundly secret. The night was very dark.No man spoke above his breath, our very steps were planted lightly.....I stepped to the hospital and paid a hasty visit to the poor fellows who occupied it.It was a mortifying reflection thatthe total absence of all adequate means of conveyance laid us under the necessity of leaving very many of them behind; nor could the non-commissioned officers or private soldiers conceal their chagrin. One of these, a sergeant of my own company,actually shed tears as he bade me farewell.....It was in vain that I reminded him that he was not singular; that Colonel Thornton, Colonel Wood, and Major Brown, besides others of less note, were doomed to be his companions in captivity. The strictest orders had been issued that no one should speak. By seven o'clock in the following morning, it was perfectly manifest that an hour's rest must be taken, otherwise one-half of the troops would be in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy.In the humanity of their conduct towards such English soldiers as fell into their hands, the Americans can be surpassed by no people whatever. To this the wounded whom we were compelled to abandon bore, after their release, ample testimony."

The British, generally brave and most dogged fighters when hard pressed or when finally aroused, have been, especially until recent years, disposed to have others do a good deal of their fighting for them. They have been liberal in the use of the lives and resources of their allies.* Formerly they rather often were of opinion that it was the better plan to hire mercenaries—and considering the character of those they nearly alway hired, compared with an Englishman, we must commend their wisdom as well as their discretion. Sometimes the employment of mercenaries had another use—when “beauty and booty” excited too much horror and indignation, the excesses were blamed, as in the case of Hampton, on the mercenaries. It must be considered that while in the War of 1812, Great Britain did things that may well excite horror, those things were done more than one hundred years ago, and the world has advanced far in humanity and decency during this more than a century. We recall the barbarities of the War of 1812 only that we may fully understand what our soldiers in the War had to fear, that we may intelligently judge them in the knowledge of the character of their opponents; for we will fall far short of doing them justice, and of taking from their deeds that inspiration that freemen constantly need, if we do not consider that they fought,

*But not always. And the accusation that they have been, has, of late, been gloriously belied.

not only the very best soldiers of Europe, but the crafty, merciless, treacherous savages. Great Britain employed these from the very beginning. In the first battle of the War of 1812 on American soil—at Brownstown, August 5, 1812—the only British troops in actual combat were Indians, under Tecumseh. The first United States soldier to be killed in the War of 1812 was Captain McCullough, killed in this battle of Brownstown, and he was scalped by an Indian before he was dead. The first victory of the British in the War of 1812 was the capture of Mackinac, and it is well to remember that the government of the United States took especial pains to inform the British commanders of the declaration of war a week or ten days before it informed the commanders of our own forts and troops, and as a result the commander of the fort at Mackinac did not know of the declaration of war until he was summoned to surrender although that was more than a week after that declaration was known, to the British forces that summoned him to surrender! Those British forces were composed of 46 regulars, 260 Canadian militia, and 572 Indians! Our troops surrendered because of the character of the Indians and, wrote Captain John Askin, who commanded 280 of the savages, "It was a fortunate circumstance that the fort surrendered without firing a single gun, for had they done so, I firmly believe not a soul of them would have been saved." That the savages gave no quarter, or if they took prisoners,

took them only to torture them, was well known, of course, to the troops of the United States and also the white British soldiers. The white British officers generally did not attempt to restrain their savage soldiers, and gave the remarkable excuse that to restrain them was impossible. The second British victory was the surrender of Hull at Detroit. Before it, however, and after Brownstown, was the battle of the Oak Woods. In this battle the Indians were more than one half the British forces. According to official reports, the British regulars and the Canadians broke and fled in confusion, leaving Tecumseh and his savages to bear the brunt of the battle. They fought well, but this battle was a victory for our forces. The first of our soldiers killed in this battle was shot from ambush by an Indian, and scalped. When General Brock, the British commander, summoned General Hull to surrender at Detroit, he wrote:

“It is far from my inclination to join in a war of extermination, but you must be aware that the numerous body of Indians who have attached themselves to my troops will be beyond my control the moment the contest commences”. Auchinleck says coolly that what most influenced Hull to surrender Detroit was his knowledge of Indian warfare. Lessing says: “This covert threat of letting loose the bloodthirsty savages upon the town and garrison of Detroit deeply impressed the commanding general with contending emotions. His whole effective force then at his dis-

posal did not exceed 1000 men* and the Fort was thronged with trembling women and children and decrepit old men of the town and country, who had fled to escape the blows of the tomahawk and the keen blade of the scalping knife". General Hull did not surrender until, after hours of battle, Tecumseh, with two British colonels under cover of night took 600 Indians and placed them in the woods to attack the Americans on the flank and in the rear. After the surrender General Brock publicly placed his rich crimson silk sash around the waist of Tecumseh. The warfare of the Indians reached its culmination, certainly the limit of fiendishness, at the second battle on the Raisin river, known sometimes as the battle of Frenchtown. Here, without any effort on the part of the white British to prevent them, the Indians tomahawked and scalped or burned alive, the wounded American prisoners. The committee of the Congress of the United States, appointed to investigate and report on the conduct of the War by the British, denounced in the strongest possible terms the barbarities of this second battle on the river Raisin, and, also, "the refusal of the last offices of humanity to the bodies of the dead. The bodies of our countrymen were exposed to every indignity and became food for brutes."

If any feel that they must judge the British for their use of the Indians, let them be careful to judge.

*At this time he had only 700.

not by the standards of today, but of a hundred years ago. Further, let them take into account that the Indians were our bitter enemies, and had reason to be, and needed no urging to fight us. In fact, the Indians were more disposed than were the British to fight us, or than the British were to have them fight us.

Furthermore, it is a safe conjecture that the common people of Great Britain did not approve of the use of Indians in the British armies, and there is no small evidence to support this. The use of the Indians was denounced as well as defended in both parliament and the reviews. But the very character of the common people of Great Britain is conclusive that they abhorred the use of the savages. In 1814 the governing class in Great Britain was far removed from the masses. They had little in common. Whatever the sins of royalty or nobility, the common people were right, as they always are, at heart. They were right in the dark years of our Civil War. When the pen fell from the hand of Henry Ward Beecher, he had just written an immortal tribute to the heroism of the English weaver who, though forced to the point of starvation, yet stood by our Union. It is almost impossible, in these days of Lloyd George, Reading and Geddes, to have an accurate conception of the British government, classes and masses in 1814; and without that conception we should not sit in judgment.

We must know of the Indians in the British forces, however, to pass an intelligent judgment on the

battle of Plattsburg. Our troops in that battle knew only too well what Indian warfare meant. They had no means of knowing that a large Indian force was not a part of the British army attacking them and they had good reason indeed to suppose that a considerable part of the British army was composed of the red devils. This explains in large part their cautious tactics during the fighting before the final day of the battle and especially their fear of and their precautions against ambush—the Indians were pastmasters of ambush, and the dense, virgin wood presented very favorable conditions for ambush. Had our troops known the truth—that for once the British forces were all white—and had fought just as they did, they would have been entitled to the highest praise for their cleverness, resourcefulness, bravery and fortitude; but when we consider that they had every reason to expect that at any moment, the stealthy, merciless savages might break from the dark woods on either flank, with tomahawk and knife, our admiration of the bravery and fighting of our troops must be all the greater.

It is a pleasure to record here that the soldiers of Wellington never desired to have the Indians to fight with them. The army under Prevost was composed of Wellington veterans and no savages marched or fought with them. The British troops at Bladensburg and Baltimore were from Wellington's Peninsular army, and they had no Indians with them. And when those same troops were taken to fight below New

Orleans, they did not desire to have associated with them the savages that were made a part of the British army in Louisiana, and these soldiers of Wellington saw to it that the savages committed no barbarities. And today there are no more honorable or chivalrous soldiers than those battling in France and elsewhere under British banners.

Although our troops could not know it until, perhaps, the last day of the battle of Plattsburg, in that battle all the troops engaged were white, of the same blood. Whether they fought under the flag of Britain or under the Stars and Stripes, they spoke the same language, they were of the same breed, their forefathers had been suckled at the same breasts. Both sides fought the same—not as savages, but as civilized men, playing the bloody, savage game of war according to the recognized rules and ready to care, even with tenderness, for the wounded foe. Better than any other battle of the War of 1812, the battle of Plattsburg revealed the fighting qualities and merits of the soldiers and sailors of the United States and Great Britain. Their sailors were picked men from the British high seas fleet. Our sailors, less in number, in ships, in guns, were the victors. Their soldiers were the very flower of Wellington's Peninsular army. Our soldiers had far less of numbers and equipment, were composed very largely of raw militia and volunteers, but they were the victors! Yet when the battle

is carefully studied it is plain that Great Britain also may have pride in that battle, for both its soldiers and sailors fought as brave and honorable men.

6.

BRITISH HUMILIATION

We must know of the chagrin and humiliation of the British because of the results of the Plattsburgh expedition, for their bitter feeling and shame is the best evidence of the importance they attached to the battle of Plattsburg.

Few events in the military history of Great Britain have proved as humiliating to the people of that kingdom as the battle of Plattsburg. Its favorable result would have had transcendent effect. It was the supreme effort of Great Britain in the War. Many of the British sailors had been selected from the British high seas fleet. The soldiers were the very best of all the British armies—the flower of Wellington's triumphant legions—better men than those sent against Washington, Baltimore or New Orleans. They were the troops so much desired by the Iron Duke at Waterloo. The British army and navy and people were, as so often, extremely over-confident. All the odds were so greatly in favor of the British that

defeat was not contemplated by them as a possibility because it was not contemplated at all! And defeat—defeat without that fraction of victory which tempered New Orleans—was administered, not by the best that the United States had as regards training and equipment, but by sailors and soldiers whose chief equipment was the blood of their Revolutionary mothers and sires, and whose chief training was the hard conditions of the life of the pioneer more than a century ago—a training that produced courage, fortitude, and resourcefulness. The fleet of the United States had been hastily built from trees taken from the forest only a short time before, and it was manned largely by sailors that had never been in a battle. The army was more than two thirds raw volunteers and militia, and the regulars were nearly all convalescents. The commanders of both the United States fleet and army were young and without renown. The British commander-in-chief, Sir George Prevost, was the idol of Canada, and by his exploits he had fairly won the high regard in which he was held; and the land forces under him were led by four major-generals who had distinguished themselves under Wellington in Spain and France. The soldiers of the United States were indeed indifferently equipped. General Izard had been sent, scarce a month before, with the best troops, to General Brown on the Niagara, and he had taken the best munitions and supplies with him. The British soldiers had the very best equipment that the most

powerful military nation of the world could supply. Small wonder, indeed, that the British had never thought of defeat, and that defeat brought humiliation so keen and deep that no attempt was made to hide it. The British expressed their humiliation openly and in words of extreme bitterness. "So amazing a defeat," says Ingersoll, "occasioned recriminations between the British navy and army."

With the exception of Prevost, each of the British commanders tried to shift the blame from himself to the others. Their numerous letters, reports, manifestoes and charges and counter-charges make amusing reading, and prove one thing—and it only—that in their hands, at least, the pen was mightier than the sword.

Auchinleck, always interesting, frequently amusing—and all the more amusing because he had not the least intention to be so—and always honest, begins his account of the battle of Plattsburg as follows:

"Hitherto our task has been comparatively painless, as when we had to chronicle defeat, we had been able to show that to superior numbers alone was it attributable, and, we have also proved by figures from American writers, that, in almost every instance in which victory was achieved, it was against a superior force". We must confess that while we have read and reread Auchinleck very carefully, we have not been able to find the proof or showing of superior numbers of which he speaks. But it is well to con-

sider Auchinleck's frank prejudice at the beginning. He continues:

"It is now our duty, however, to chronicle one of the most humiliating defeats ever sustained by a British force, and the task is the more painful as the defeat arose from no misconduct on the part of the troops, but was solely produced by the imbecility and vacillation of Sir George Prevost".

It will be seen that Auchinleck is angry. He is mad. He is peeved. His placing the blame on Prevost is unjust. Subsequent pages will show that the British commander-in-chief was neither weak nor vacillating in the events leading up to the battle of Plattsburg or during that battle. But it is certainly true that Plattsburg was "one of the most humiliating defeats ever sustained by a British force."

Christie, the officer of the Canadian army, says in his history of the War:

"Thus terminated the luckless and humiliating expedition to Plattsburg, with the loss of the squadron (the gunboats, owing to the mis-conduct of the officer in command, excepted) and five hundred men of the land forces killed, wounded and missing."

There is no ground for placing the Plattsburg defeat on any ill luck of the British and it may well be stated here, also, that while others agree with Christie that the British gunboats did not fight well, there is much evidence that they did as well as they could. But there is no conflict of evidence that the expe-

dition was, as Christie says, "humiliating" to the British.

Doubtless the British soldiers and sailors fought well. They had been well seasoned, they had fought well in other engagements, and they were accustomed to victory. Their feelings were doubtless even less pleasant than those of the civilians. Christie says:

"So circumstanced, the army, indignant at being obliged to retire before an enemy their inferior in discipline and renown, fell back upon Chazy in the evening, with little molestation from the Americans. The unfortunate result of this expedition irritated the army, which felt itself humiliated in being compelled to retire before an enemy which they had been taught to disdain."

To return to Auchinleck. He says:

"The unfortunate commander of the British forces, in the expedition against Plattsburg, has been almost universally made the target against which the most envenomed arrows have been directed. Peace be to his ashes, as his death was occasioned by over-anxiety to hasten home in order to clear his character from the imputations cast on it, and we would that justice permitted us to pass over in silence the last act of the drama. This, however, may not be, and did not even impartiality demand a faithful narration of the unfortunate result of the most important expedition undertaken during the three years war, the

loud boastings of the Americans would impose on us the necessity of showing that it was not to the men that the defeat at Plattsburg was attributable, but that to the commander alone was the disgraceful termination of the expedition due."

While the British were divided as to where the blame should be placed, they were not divided in the opinion that the result of the expedition was disgraceful. It may well be remarked, also, that the conduct and character of some, at least, of his accusers were such that they would not have dared to put the blame on Prevost had he been alive.

To understand the chagrin and bitterness of the British, we must consider the disparity of the forces engaged, both in numbers and character. That belongs properly to another chapter. We may well close this one with another quotation from Auchinleck:

"Well does it become the leader who, at Plattsburg, covered the British army with shame, and himself with enduring infamy, retiring at the head of fifteen thousand men— chiefly the flower of the Duke of Wellington's army—before a force of Americans not exceeding as many hundreds,the elite of the army under his command recently from France and Spain—men accustomed to victory, and again marching to it, as they believed—well provided with an abundant commissariat, and stores of all kinds, and led on by experienced and able officers".

The British felt that the defeat at Plattsburg covered their army and navy with shame. They may be pardoned this feeling—it was fully justified. Yet their soldiers and sailors added to their honorable renown.

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7.

FORCES ENGAGED

In his history of the War of 1812, Gilliland says that when General Izard took four thousand of the best troops from Plattsburg in August, 1814, "General Macomb was left in command with little better than fourteen hundred regulars, many of whom were invalids." All the historians, British as well as Americans, put the regular troops under Macomb at substantially this figure. None places the number above fifteen hundred. Macomb said himself in his official report of the battle:

"I had but just returned from the lines, where I had commanded a fine brigade which was broken up to form the division under major-general Izard, and ordered to the westward. Being senior officer, he left me in command; and, except the four companies of the 6th regiment, I had not an organized battallion among those remaining. The garrison was composed of convalescents and recruits of the new regiments, all in the greatest confusion, as well as the ordnance and

stores, and the works in no state of defense. To create an emulation and zeal among the officers and men in completing the works, I divided them into detachments, and placed them near the several forts; declaring in orders that each detachment was the garrison of its own work, and bound to defend it to the last extremity. The enemy marched continually and by short marches, and our soldiers worked day and night, so that by the time he made his appearance before the place we were prepared to receive him. General Izard named the principal work Fort Moreau; and, to remind the troops of the actions of their brave countrymen, I called the redoubt on the right Fort Brown, and on the left Fort Scott. Besides these three works, we had two block houses strongly fortified. Finding, on examining the returns of the garrison, that our force did not exceed fifteen hundred effective men for duty, and well informed that the enemy had as many thousand, I called on General Mooers, of the New York militia, and arranged with him plans for bringing forth the militia en masse. The inhabitants of the village fled with their families and effects, except a few worthy citizens and some boys, who formed themselves into a party, received rifles, and were exceedingly useful. By the 4th of the month General Mooers collected about 700 militia, and advanced seven miles on the Beekman-town road, to watch the motions of the enemy, and to skirmish with him as he advanced; also to obstruct the roads with fallen trees and to

break up the bridges.....By this time the militia of New York and the volunteers of Vermont were pouring in from all quarters."

Let us stop for a moment to consider the foregoing. The inhabitants of Plattsburg incapable of fighting, did only the wise thing to leave the village. Those that could fight, remained to do so, even to the boys. In speaking of this Gilliland says: "The females and children were sent out of the way, and every person capable of bearing arms, were provided with muskets to aid in repelling the invaders of their altars and firesides. Even boys were armed, and, forming themselves into a company, were found efficient on the day of the battle." These boys were doubtless descendants of the boys that fought in the Revolution.

The foregoing reveals General Macomb as the able, resourceful, patriotic general that he was. His brigade was taken from him. He was left with a few convalescents. Many generals would have sulked. But he took hold aggressively, with what he had, and used both brains and energy. He shrewdly made the different detachments of his troops responsible for their own defensive works—the better they worked to make the defenses effective, the better they would be protected. And again he showed his broadmindedness and his patriotism by naming the two redoubts after two generals that had been successful on the New York frontier—another move of not only the patriotic, but the able commander, able to understand psy-

chology and to create morale. Yet further, as shown by the foregoing, and as will appear more completely hereafter, he sent his militia to skirmish with and annoy and retard the British, thus accomplishing two important purposes at the same time— he gave the militia needed training and experience in actual warfare; and they did retard and hinder the British, thus giving valuable time to complete the works on the south side of the Saranac.

There is a little uncertainty about the number of volunteers and militia that participated in the battle, but their number can be determined within two hundred or less. Auchinleck puts the number at three thousand and this is substantially correct. It is certain that the number was not greater than 3,200, the figure named by Ingersoll. Auchinleck says that Maccomb's forces were "fifteen hundred of the refuse of the American army and three thousand raw militia."

Prevost certainly had all of fourteen thousand and there is evidence that he had more, possibly close to sixteen thousand men. Christie says:

"The arrival of a strong reinforcement of near sixteen thousand men from the Garonne, of the Duke of Wellington's army, in July and August (1814), determined Sir George Prevost to invade the State of New York by way of Lake Champlain." He already had some troops before he received this reinforcement of sixteen thousand.

Macomb says that Prevost had fifteen thousand. Ingersoll gives him the same number. The best estimate that can be made from the available facts is that the total force of Macomb was 4,700; of Prevost 14,000 to 15,000. The figure named for Macomb's forces is very nearly accurate; that for Prevost's may be almost quite two thousand too low. Naturally enough the British concealed, as far as possible, the number of their troops before the battle and certainly they did not make the number too large after the battle.

As already indicated, there was as great disparity in the character and equipment of the two armies as there was in their number. The Low history says that the "British land forces.....consisted of four brigades, each commanded by a major-general of experience; a light squadron of dragoons, and an immense train of artillery, and all the engines of war." While, measured by the standards of today, this "immense train of artillery" would be insignificant, measured by the standards of 1814 Prevost was indeed well supplied with artillery. In his report of the battle he speaks of his "batteries" being erected as his forces reached Plattsburg, and again he states that "the batteries opened their fire the instant the ships were engaged"; and he also says in his report that he had "ordered the batteries to be dismantled." Not only were the British well supplied with cannon, but they had abundant ammunition and stores of all kinds.

"The British were not merely veterans," Ingersoll says, "but renowned, fresh from European campaigns, completely equipped, supplied and corroborated by recollections of recent exploits, the admiration and master-strokes of the world." As for the American forces, the few regular troops, ill supplied by the weak and inefficient national administration, and the volunteers, supplied only by themselves, were poorly supplied indeed with guns, ammunition, food and clothing. The one thing they possessed in abundance was real patriotism.

Regarding the forces employed in the naval battle, the various reports and histories substantially agree as to the ships. There are some differences as to guns and men. But all agree, and positively, that the British fleet was the superior in all three particulars—ships, guns and men. In the following table—and which makes easy a comparison of the two fleets—that number of ships is given on which all agree, and that number of guns and men that is supported by the preponderance of evidence:

American Fleet			
Saratoga (ship)	26 guns	210 men	
Eagle (brig)	20 "	120 "	
Ticonderoga (schooner)	17 "	110 "	
Preble (sloop)	7 "	30 "	
Ten gun boats	16 "	350 "	
Total	86 "	820 "	

British Fleet

Confiance (frigate)	39 guns	300 men
Linnet (brig)	16 "	120 "
Chub	11 "	40 "
Finch	11 "	40 "
Twelve gun boats	18 "	550 "

Total95 " 1050 "

Some make the superiority of the British in guns quite a little greater. Some credit the British with thirteen gun boats, or barges. But the thirteenth barge was undoubtedly the one that the British, absolutely sure of victory, loaded with civilians, including women, to witness the battle and aid in celebrating the British victory.

Auchinleck, who certainly would not knowingly make the strength of the Americans any less or the British force greater than it was, gives the flotillas as follows:

American—Saratoga, 26 guns; Surprise (Eagle) 20 guns; Thunderer (Ticonderoga) 16 guns; Preble, 7 guns; 10 gun boats, 14 guns; total, 83 guns.

British—Confiance, 36 guns; Linnet, 18 guns; Broke (Chub) 10 guns; Shannon (Finch) 10 guns; 12 gun boats, 16 guns; total, 90 guns.

Ingersoll says that the American fleet "consisted of four vessels and 10 gun boats, or barges, altogether 14 craft, carrying 102 cannon, manned by 850 men. The British squadron had also four vessels, with 12

gun boats, or barges, altogether 16, carrying 115 guns, and manned by 1,000seamen and officers."

Gilliland, in his history generally correct as to numbers and relative strength of forces although his pages are filled with a just indignation against the British, says that "as an instance of the wonderful exertion made on this important occasion, he (MacDonough) added a brig to his force, before greatly inferior to the enemy's, in the short period of twenty days, the timber of which was actually growing on the Lake, when the work was begun."

Considering the means and appliances available at that time, and especially those to which MacDonough was limited, this achievement was truly remarkable, although the warships of a hundred years ago now appear to be almost ludicrously small. Ingersoll's statement is undoubtedly correct that "Commodore Downie's frigate" —the *Confiance*—was "160 feet long by 40 feet beam." That, of course, was the largest vessel in either squadron. It was so far the superior that Downie "assured the army that with his ship alone he could take the whole American squadron."

We now know that Downie was over-confident; but it is nevertheless true that among the British, both officers and men, both lake and land forces, "entire confidence prevailed in the superiority of the British vessels, their heavier metal, more numerous veteran crews, and much more experienced officers."

8.

THE BATTLE UP TO SEPTEMBER 11TH

The River Chazy flows from the west into Lake Champlain a few miles south of the boundary line between the United States and Canada.

The Saranac River flows also from the west into Lake Champlain, but about twenty-five miles south of the United States-Canada boundary line. For some miles before it reaches the lake it flows east and west. As it nears the lake its banks become higher, steeper and rocky. It empties into a little bay known as Plattsburg Bay, partially enclosed by a promontory known as Cumberland Head. The village of Plattsburg was, in 1814, nearly altogether on the north of the Saranac. Running for some distance, and terminating near the lake, on the south of the Saranac is a considerable elevation, and it was here that Macomb located his principal works. In his official report of the battle, Prevost said:

"I found the enemy in the occupation of an elevated ridge of land on the south branch (bank) of the

Saranac, crowned with three strong redoubts, and other field works."

Of this hereafter.

The naval battle was fought in the Bay of Plattsburg.

While the decisive part of the land battle was fought on the banks of the Saranac, that battle began several days before and near the Chazy.

In his official report of the battle to Earl Bathurst, written the evening of September 11th—the date of the naval battle and the defeat of the land forces, and while his army was already in retreat—Prevost says:

"Upon the arrival of the reinforcements from the Garonne, I lost no time in assembling three brigades on the frontier of Lower Canada.....As the troops concentrated and approached the line of separation between this province and the United States, the American army abandoned its entrenched camp on the river Chazy, a position I immediately seized and occupied in force on the 3rd inst. The following day the whole of the left division advanced to the village of Chazy, without meeting the least opposition from the enemy. On the 5th, it halted within eight miles of this place, having surmounted the difficulties created by the obstructions in the road from the felling of trees and the removal of bridges. The next day the division moved to Plattsburg, in two columns, on parallel roads; the right column led by Major-General Power's brigade, supported by four companies of light

infantry and a demi-brigade, under Major-General Robinson; the left by Major-General Brisbane's brigade. The enemy's militia supported by his regulars, attempted to impede the advance of the right column, but they were driven before it from all their positions, and the column entered Plattsburg. This rapid movement having reversed the strong position taken up by the enemy at Dead Creek, it was precipitately abandoned by him, and his gun boats alone left to defend the ford, and to prevent our restoring the bridges, which had been imperfectly destroyed—an inconvenience soon surmounted."

In justice to Sir George Prevost it should be considered that he wrote this dispatch the evening of the day on which the British had been defeated, when his troops were retiring in confusion, abandoning not only the greater part of their stores, but their wounded and dead; therefore, he is probably excusable for omitting some really important facts about his advance to Plattsburg. It was only natural that he should describe his march as an easy, and, up to the 11th, a complete, triumph. But the preponderance of evidence is to the effect that Prevost minimized the opposition to his advance put up by the United States militia and regulars, and magnified his success.

General Macomb, not writing his report on the 11th, goes more into details. He says:

"By the 4th of the month General Mooers collected about 700 militia, and advanced seven miles on the

Beekman-town road, to watch the motions of the enemy, and to skirmish with him as he advanced; also obstruct the road with fallen trees, and to break up the bridges. On the Lake Road at Dead Creek bridge, I posted 200 men under Captain Sproul, of the 13th regiment, with orders to abattis the woods, to place obstructions in the road, and to fortify himself; to this party I added two field pieces. In advance of that position was lieut.-col. Appling, with 110 riflemen, watching the movements of the enemy, and procuring intelligence. It was ascertained, that before daylight on the 6th, the enemy would advance in two columns on the two roads before mentioned, dividing at Sampson's, a little below Chazy village. The columns on the Beekman-town road proceeded most rapidly; the militia skirmished with his advanced parties, and except a few brave men, fell back most precipitately in the greatest disorder, notwithstanding the British troops did not deign to fire on them, except by their flankers and advanced patrols. The night previous, I ordered Major Wool to advance with a detachment of 250 men to support the militia, and set them an example of firmness, also Captain Leonard, of the light-artillery, was directed to proceed with two pieces to be on the ground before day; yet he did not make his appearance until eight o'clock when the enemy had approached within two miles of the village. With his conduct, therefore, I am not well pleased. Major Wool with his party, disputed the road with great ob-

stinacy, but the militia could not be prevailed on to stand, notwithstanding the exertions of the generals and staff-officers; although the fields were divided by strong stone walls, and they were told that the enemy could not possibly cut them off. The state dragoons of New York wear red coats; and they being on the heights to watch the enemy gave constant alarm to the militia, who mistook them for the enemy and feared his getting in their rear.*

“Finding the enemy’s column had penetrated within a mile of Plattsburg, I dispatched my aid-de-camp, Lieutenant Root, to bring off the detachment at Dead Creek, and to inform Lieut.-Colonel Appling that I wished him to fall on the enemy’s right flank. The colonel fortunately arrived just in time to save his retreat, and to fall in with the head of a column debouching from the woods. Here he poured in a destructive fire from his riflemen at rest, and continued to annoy the enemy until he formed a junction with Major Wool. The field-pieces did considerable execution among the enemy’s columns. So undaunted, however, was the enemy, that he never deployed in his whole march, always passing on in columns. Finding that every road was full of troops, crowding on us on all sides, I ordered the field pieces to retire across

*At this time the militia had great fear of being ambushed by Indians—the militia had good reason to suppose that Indians were a part of the British forces and had no means of learning that Prevost had no Indians.

the bridge, and form a battery for its protection, and to cover the retreat of the infantry, which was accordingly done, and the parties of Appling and Wool, as well as that of Sproul, retired, alternately keeping up a brisk fire until they got under cover of the works. The enemy's light troops occupied the houses near the bridge, and kept up a constant firing from the windows and balconies, and annoyed us much. I ordered them to be driven out with hot shot, which soon put the houses in flames, and obliged those sharp shooters to retire. The whole day, until it was too late to see, the enemy's light troops endeavored to drive our guards from the bridge, but they suffered dearly for their perseverance. An attempt was also made to cross the upper bridge, where the militia handsomely drove them back. The column which marched by the lake-road was much impeded by the obstructions, and the removal of the bridge at Dead Creek; and, as it passed the creek and beach, the gallies kept up a lively and galling fire. Our troops being now all on the south side of the Saranac, I directed the planks to be taken off the bridges and piled up in the form of breast works, to cover our parties intended for disputing the passage, which afterwards enabled us to hold the bridges against very superior numbers. From the 7th to the 11th the enemy was employed in getting on his battering train, and erecting his batteries and approaches, and constantly skirmishing at the bridges and fords. By this time the militia from New York

and the volunteers of Vermont were pouring in from all quarters. I advised General Mooers to keep his forces along the Saranac to prevent the enemy's crossing the river, and to send a strong body in his rear to harass him day and night, and keep him in continual alarm. The militia behaved with great spirit after the first day and the volunteers of Vermont were exceedingly serviceable. Our regular troops, notwithstanding the constant skirmishing, and repeated endeavors of the enemy to cross the river, kept at their work day and night, strengthening the defenses, and evinced a determination to hold out to the last extremity. It was reported that the enemy only awaited the arrival of his flotilla to make the general attack."

It is plain that the 700 militia did not stand, the first day, before at least ten times their number of Wellington's famous soldiers. They can hardly be blamed. We have no evidence from any source that any of them had ever been in a battle. It seems quite certain that at the most very few of them had ever been under fire before. And not all gave way precipitately. We may be sure that Macomb, young, impatient of retreat, did not make their conduct appear any better than it was that first day; yet he says that some fought well, and he also says that "the militia behaved with great spirit after the first day". Possibly they did not do so badly the first day. They were opposed by ten times their number of what were known as the best soldiers in the world, and who had gained in

Spain a reputation not only for bravery, but ferocity. Furthermore, the militia did not know that there were not stealing through the woods, for sudden attack, the merciless savages that so often had ambushed our troops or attacked them in flank and rear. No; one cannot blame the militia for their conduct that first day, and one must admire them for their good fighting afterwards, as he must admire the brave handful of regulars that Macomb spared from the labor of building his works of defense, to delay the advance of the British until those works could be completed. Nor can one fail to admire the British soldiers. They were brave men and they fought honorably. One cannot escape a feeling of sorrow that such brave, well trained troops should have suffered because of the over-confidence that has so often brought disaster to British forces. They disdained to break their columns to fight with the handful of raw troops they despised. And in justice to them it should be said again, that there is no evidence that Wellington's soldiers ever desired any aid from the Indians. No Indians accompanied these soldiers to Plattsburg, Washington or Baltimore; and the few at the battle of New Orleans were probably not more in number than those General Jackson employed in the woods on his left flank. The men that fought at Plattsburg, on both land and water, on both sides, were brave men!

Against the more than 14,000 veterans from the Peninsula, lavishly equipped, Macomb could send 700

militia, 560 regulars, and four cannon; yet they accomplished the purpose for which they were sent—obstructed the roads, harassed the enemy, retired voluntarily from Dead Creek, and when the more than 14,000 veterans reached the Saranac, held them there; being now aided by the Vermont volunteers, who “were exceedingly serviceable”.

The Low history gives a terse account of the events up to the 11th. It says:

“The army left at Plattsburg, after the march of General Izard, was very weak; the command devolved on General Macomb. The enemy embraced this opportunity for making an incursion into the state of New York, on the side of Lake Champlain, with a view to secure a strong position at Crown Point, or Ticonderoga, previous to going into winter quarters; and, ultimately, to co-operate with an army, that was to invade the state of New York, or Connecticut, on the seaboard; and thus effect the great object of the British government, the political separation of the eastern from the southern states. General Sir George Prevost commanded the British land forces, destined for this service, consisting of four brigades, each commanded by a major-general of experience. While the troops advanced by land, the fleet, apparently superior to the American, advanced by water No sooner was the intention of the enemy discovered, than the militia was called out; those of the county of Clinton assembled on the 2nd September, near the

village of Chazy. On the following day, Gen. Wright took position, with his brigade, seven miles in advance of Plattsburg. On the advance of the enemy, Col. Appling, who was placed with his command on the lake road, fell back to Dead Creek, where he posted himself, and impeded the approach of the pursuers so much by blocking up the passage, that the enemy was compelled to alter his course toward the Beekmantown road. On the morning of the 6th, the advance of the enemy attacked the militia, about 700, under General Mooers, and a small detachment of regulars under Major Wool. Unfortunately a part of the militia broke and fled, the remainder, together with the regulars, made a bold and masterly opposition, retiring slowly and regularly, before a large force for six miles, when they were reinforced within a mile of Plattsburg by a Captain Leonard and a few men with two pieces of artillery. This force, by taking advantage of the cover of a stone wall, made a stand and checked the progress of the enemy, until overpowered by superior numbers, it retired, as before, slowly, dealing death among the enemy, until it reached the south bank of the Saranac, where the pursuit of the enemy was effectually checked and he was forced to retire. From this time until the morning that was to decide the fate of Plattsburg, and perhaps of Albany, continual skirmishing was kept up, each party preparing itself for the bloody conflict. The enemy occupied an extent of about three miles, he erected seven heavy batteries,

and fully supplied himself with all the usual means of attack. The Americans were engaged in annoying the enemy and strengthening their own works."

It is well for us to have before us this extract from the Low history, for this history is founded on state rather than national records, and it is written from the New York militia viewpoint. It agrees in the substantial facts with the other records and is additional evidence that the 700 militia and handful of regulars stoutly opposed the march of the British, and kept them busy while Macomb was completing his defensive works and until the volunteers assembled.

Christie says that of the two columns in which the British troops marched, "the column advancing by the western road was smartly opposed by the enemy's militia." He continues that this column "drove the enemy back on Plattsburg on the sixth, and opened the way for the left brigade, by Dead Creek, a strong position upon the border of Lake Champlain, which the enemy had occupied in force, after destroying a bridge over the stream, which in this place was not fordable, having so distributed their gun boats (ten in number six of which each carried one long twenty-four, and an eighteen pound carronade, the others a long twelve each) as to take the British in flank on their approach. The enemy fell back upon their redoubts beyond the Saranac, keeping a vigilant outlook upon the fords of the river with strong picquets of light troops. On the seventh the heavy artillery being brought forward,

eligible situations were chosen to place them in battery, when it was observed that the squadron had changed their position from that of the preceding day, and were anchored out of reach of their own, as well as of the British batteries."

It was truly inconsiderate and annoying on the part of the United States squadron thus to get out of range of the British batteries of heavy guns. All the more, as there was no apparent reason why the squadron should remain, at that time, within range of our batteries.

The United States gun boats at Dead Creek, that fired on the flank of the British column, spoken of by Christie, the Canadian officer with the British forces, were the "gallies" spoken of by Macomb. This use of the gun boats should be noted, as it shows that our forces lost no opportunity to interfere with the plans of the British. Both Macomb and MacDonough were alert and resourceful. And the British were capable, confident and imperturbable.

Ingersoll is so helpful in understanding the influences and spirit that moulded and animated the United States forces, and especially the militia and volunteers, that we will lengthen a little this chapter, already long, by quoting from him:

"War had always been Macomb's vocation, which he had followed as his only profession from the time he entered the army as a very young lieutenant. Macomb accessible, sociable, playful, was a well

trained and industrious soldier, with no supercilious aversion to militia, volunteers and those irregular troops whom Izard contemptuously designated as people requiring a popular leader. Macomb's brigade was broken up by Izard in selecting his men to take from that station, where he left only fifteen hundred fit for field duty to make head against the British fourteen thousand. Falling back upon Plattsburg, Macomb had but a few days in which to prepare for the most serious attack, as to disparity of numbers, ever made on the Americans: nearly ten to one.... Militia were called out from New York and Vermont, about 3,200 of whom repaired, of all parties, to Macomb's standard; good troops as they proved, as such troops are for any sudden and defensive operation, especially whenever they are protected by streams, woods, and forts, associated with regular soldiers, and commanded by a leader willing to make the best, instead of inclined to make the worst, of such indispensable comrades in arms in nearly every American conflict. Besides completing his intrenchments, Macomb employed his men in harassing the enemy as they advanced, and preparing by such apprenticeship for the contests soon to ensue..... General Macomb, to remind his troops of their brave countrymen, of whom he had no invidious feelings, named the two redoubts he constructed Forts Brown and Scott, names dear to American soldiers, and electrifying the ardor pervading their ranks. Generals Izard and Macomb differed

much as to the condition of the place and troops left by the former to the latter's care, who found it, he said, in great confusion, the ordnance, the stores, the works, in no state of defense: the garrison composed of convalescents and recruits of new regiments, unorganized and unprepared for their difficult tasks. To excite their emulation.....Macomb assigned to different parties the separate defense of the several forts, declaring, by general orders, that he relied on each party to defend its particular charge to the last extremity. From the 6th to the 11th of September, contested every inch of ground with the enemy. The militia in the field, and even in the woods, often timorous.....but a few days practice under officers who gave every encouragement, brought them to the Saranac river better disciplined, and, when on their own side of it, easily rallied to resist and successfully repel attempts of the British to force their way across the fords."

Here we have a really good portrait of the able, resourceful and patriotic commander. If Macomb had been like many generals—and the war of 1812 had its full quota—he would have sulked when his brigade was broken up. But he did nothing of the kind. He started out at once to do, cheerfully, energetically, the best he could with the meagre means he had. He might easily have been discouraged. The wonder is that he was not greatly discouraged. Surely he was of stout heart. When Izard marched from Plattsburg

with very nearly all the well seasoned troops there, he wrote to the Secretary of War that "everything in the vicinity, and the lately erected works at Plattsburg and Cumberland Head, would in less than three days be in possession of the enemy." This shows his opinion of the force he left with Macomb, but shows that he did not know that general. At that date a part of Macomb's force was worth to that general less than nothing, for convalescents are a burden, not an aid. One can easily see what must have been the morale of the troops left to Macomb—they knew that they were left because Izard considered them inferior and undesirable. Yet it appears that within twenty-four hours this enthusiastic, shrewd general had created emulation, vigor and morale. As Ingersoll points out, he understood and prized the militia and volunteers. He and they were en rapport. Like Jackson at New Orleans, he was one among his men, yet much above them. He knew that these raw soldiers were brave and intelligent, and steadying them with veterans, he used them to delay Prevost, and, at the same time, gave them the very best intensive training! Macomb knew how to employ time and men to the very best advantage. He both commanded and led. He was so big and broad and generous that he, the better to enthuse and encourage his men, named the two redoubts after the two popular generals of the United States at that time. There have been generals so narrow and envious that they would not have done that.

In his generosity and big-heartedness and freedom from envy and jealousy, Macomb made for himself a place among such commanders as Washington and Lafayette, Grant and Sherman, Lee and Jackson, Thomas and Sheridan. Plattsburg was a victory for our troops as well as our fleet because intelligent men, quick to learn, brave and patriotic, were so fortunate as to be commanded by such a general as Macomb.

9.

THE BATTLE ON THE LAKE

We must consider that when the battle of Plattsburg was fought there were no railroads. Much of Prevost's march to the Saranac had been through dense woods, along roads hardly deserving the name. If he won at Plattsburg and in due time passed on to the south, to divide New England from the rest of the United States, he must, to be safe as regards supplies and against attack in his rear, have the mastery on Lake Champlain. It would have been fatal to leave a hostile naval force on the lake. Hence when his land forces reached Plattsburg, and had mounted their cannon in batteries on the north bank of the Saranac, he felt compelled to delay his attempt to advance farther until the British fleet on Lake Champlain was ready to go into action.

As will appear later, there developed, after the battle, a very bitter controversy between the friends of Prevost and of Sir James Yeo, commodore and commander-in-chief of the British naval forces operating

against the United States on Lake Ontario and Champlain, and especially Captain Downie, Commander of the British flotilla on Lake Champlain, over the circumstances that led up to the beginning of the naval battle. It appears quite certain that Prevost wished the British flotilla to attack as soon as he reached the Saranac, and expected it to do so; and that Captain Downie, of the *Confiance*, and who was in immediate command of the lake flotilla, was not ready to fight until the morning of the 11th. In his report, from which we have already quoted, Prevost says that when he reached the Saranac the 7th, he found the flotilla of the United States at anchor in Plattsburg Bay, but out of gun shot from the shore and that he "immediately communicated this circumstance to Captain Downie, who had been recently appointed to command the vessels on Lake Champlain, and requested his co-operation, and in the meantime batteries were constructed for the guns brought from the rear. On the morning of the 11th our flotilla was seen over the Isthmus which joins Cumberland-head, steering for Plattsburg bay."

It will be noticed that Prevost says nothing about communications between him and Downie during the period from the morning of the 7th to the morning of the 11th. As will appear hereafter, Sir James Yeo stated in his dispatch about the battle that it appeared to him that "Captain Downie was urged, and his ship hurried into action, before he was in a fit state to meet the enemy". Captain Pring, who succeeded to the

command of the British flotilla on the death of Captain Downie, said in his account of the battle that "in consequence of the earnest solicitation of his excellency, Sir George Prevost, for the co-operation of the naval forces on this lake to attack that of the enemy. . . every possible exertion was used to accelerate the armament of the new ship, that the military movements might not be postponed at such an advanced season of the year, longer than was absolutely necessary." The enemies of Prevost made much of this; yet there is nothing in it to show that the British flotilla went into action until it was fully prepared to do so or that Prevost asked it, or desired it, to engage our ships before it was ready to do so. He asked only haste in preparation, which was really important, and which he certainly had a right to ask. There is abundant evidence that Downie did not attack until he was ready to do so, and also the evidence is unanimous to that effect.

It is probable that the chief cause of Downie's delay was lack of wind or unfavorable wind. We get interesting and instructive light on this and other points of the battle on the lake and the reason for it, from what is said by Christie. He states that Prevost informed Downie "of the position of the American squadron; and that the attack by land and water might be simultaneous, he deferred an attack upon the works until the arrival of the squadron. This resolution (it is said) was adopted with the unanimous concurrence of the General Officers present. The escape of

the enemy's fleet to the narrow channels at the head of the Lake might render it impracticable to engage them with any prospect of success: a final decision of the naval ascendancy, on the Lake at the present juncture, was therefore of the utmost importance to the ulterior operations of the army, and the expediency of such a measure was universally acknowledged, particularly as the strongest confidence prevailed in the superiority of the British vessels, their weight of metal, and in the capacity and experience of their officers and crews; and as the Commander of the Forces was informed by an officer of his staff, who had been dispatched to Captain Downie, that he considered himself, with his own vessel alone (the *Confiance*) a match for the whole American squadron. At midnight on the 9th of September, Sir George Prevost received a communication from Captain Downie, stating that he was prepared for service and proposed getting under weigh with his squadron the same night at twelve o'clock, with the intention of doubling Cumberland Head (at the entrance of Plattsburg Bay) about day-break and engaging the enemy's squadron if anchored in a position to justify such a measure. The troops at dawn of day were under arms, but there being no appearance of the fleet at the expected hour, they were sent into quarters. Sir George Prevost wrote a note to Captain Downie acquainting him that the army had been held in readiness that morning for the expected arrival, and expressing his hopes that the wind only had delayed

the appearance of the squadron. The brave Downie, who to the noble and manly virtues characteristic of his profession, united the nicest sense of honor, is said to have been fired with indignation at the reflection contained in the note. No communication subsequent to that of the 9th was, however, received from him at Head Quarters."

The evidence is conclusive that it was agreed and fully understood that Prevost was not to attack the American forces until Downie began the naval engagement, and that Prevost was to attack as soon as Downie got into action. Ingersoll says that "in a council of war held by the British generals, it was unanimously resolved that the attack on Plattsburg must be simultaneous by land and water, and therefore that of the army was deferred till the whole squadron arrived." Undoubtedly this was well understood by Downie. This subject will be taken up again later, but it is necessary to understand, at this time, that both the land and naval forces understood that they were to attack at the same time; and that the land forces were ready to attack before the flotilla appeared for battle.

MacDonough, the commander of the American flotilla on Lake Champlain, was a shrewd, able and courageous commander. He was well aware that his squadron was the weaker in ships, guns and men. Naturally and properly he took what advantage of position he could. His ships were in Plattsburg Bay,

just beyond the range of the British land batteries, and also where the British ships would be hampered and hindered in manoeuvring. This was a matter of great importance in the days of sailing vessels, and with nearly all their guns fixed—long before the day of the revolving turret. Furthermore, MacDonough arranged his ships in line in such a way that the British flotilla could not enter the bay without being exposed to a broadside from all of them. The prows were to the north: first the *Eagle*, at the head of the line, and then the *Saratoga*, *Ticonderoga* and *Preble* in order. The *Preble* was placed so near a shoal that the British vessels could not pass around it. MacDonough placed his ten gun boats inside of his line, opposite the intervals between the larger vessels.

MacDonough showed his originality and resource by an original device that probably made it possible for him to win the battle. The credit for this device has been given by some to the sailing master of the *Saratoga*, MacDonough's flag ship. Whether the credit belongs to MacDonough or someone else, he laid a kedge anchor broad off each of the bows of the *Saratoga*, and carried the hawsers to the quarters. Thus by winding in one or the other of the hawsers the stern of the ship could be swung one way or the other, while the cable of the main anchor kept her bow in one place. By this arrangement the *Saratoga* could be turned quickly, so as to bring her broadside to bear on any point. This original and masterly stroke of sea-

manship proved to be of the greatest importance.

Here is timely an extract from Ingersoll's account of the battle that is so characteristic of that entertaining, if not always accurate, writer, that, as it states a historical fact, I feel justified in placing it before my readers:

"The young American commander, then 31 years of age, introduced his appeal to mortal combat by intercession to Almighty God.....among other pious invocations, reading that ordained by the Protestant Episcopal ritual before a sea fight: 'O! most powerful and glorious Lord God, we make our address to Thy divine Majesty in this necessity: that Thou wouldst take the cause into Thy own hands, and judge between us and our enemies. Stir up Thy strength, O Lord, and come and help us; for Thou givest not always the battle to the strong, but canst save by many or by few. Make it appear that Thou art our Savior and Mighty Deliverer, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' While the Governor of Vermont, under the influence of the Governor of Massachusetts and his abettors held back from MacDonough's help, denouncing the war as wickedly waged against the bulwarks of our holy religion, a young lieutenant, in all the beauty of holiness, by prayers of the church of the country, against which his own was accused of iniquitous hostilities, sanctified his immolation, if God so willed it, on the altar of his church and country, with the prayers of the English church for the safety of its American offspring."

Another episode of this battle, that is fairly well authenticated, appealed strongly to the popular fancy at the time. A vigorous young rooster, certainly animated by pure patriotism, escaped from his coop on the deck of the Saratoga, at the first boom of the cannon, flew upon a gun slide, flapped his wings, and crowed loudly. This story is varied by some and elaborated by others. Some go so far as to assert that the rooster suddenly appeared, no one knew from where, on the Saratoga; others say that he flew to the highest cross piece of the mast and crowed lustily. But the version given above has the best evidence to support it, and is the most plausible. It appears certain that a rooster did crow on the Saratoga at the beginning of the battle and that this greatly heartened the sailors of the ship.

The British did not entertain any thought of defeat. They knew that their flotilla was superior in ships, guns and number of men. Captain Downie is quoted by Christie as saying that with his flagship, the *Confiance*, alone he could defeat the flotilla of the United States—a fine, characteristic example of British over-confidence. Christie says of the beginning of the battle:

“At the dawn of day on the 11th, the wind being observed to be favorable for the advance of the squadron, the troops were put under arms, and at seven o'clock its approach was announced by the scaling of the guns of the *Confiance*, which rounded Cumberland

Head, with a leading breeze, leaving the other vessels and gun boats far in her wake. At 8 o'clock the whole fire of the enemy's squadron, moored in line, was directed upon the *Confiance*, which moved gallantly into action without returning a shot (Captain Downie intending to lay his ship athwart house of the enemy's largest ship) until within two cable lengths of the enemy's line, when, having two anchors shot away, and the wind baffling, she came to anchor and opened a destructive fire upon the enemy. The *Linnet* and *Chub*, some time after, took their stations at a short distance, but the *Chub* having had her cables, bowsprit, and main boom shot away, became unmanageable, and drifting within the enemy's line, was obliged to surrender."

It will be observed that, as has been generally the case, the United States tars could shoot.

This must be said also of the British tars, as appears from the excellent account of the battle given by Rossiter Johnson. His account of the beginning of the battle differs in details from Christie's account:

"The English line bore down on the American in fine style, the first two vessels firing as they approached. The flagship *Confiance* did not open fire till she had dropped anchor within a quarter of a mile of her foe. The *Eagle*, at the head of the American line, began firing in a wild way, without orders, before her shots could reach the enemy. Then a long gun, sighted by MacDonough himself, was fired, and

as the shot raked the deck of the *Confiance*, the whole line opened and the battle became general. The first broadside from the *Confiance* disabled forty men on the *Saratoga*; for fifteen minutes everything was ablaze, and the roar was continuous. Then the vessel at the head of the British line struck her colors. The enemy's shot cut away the *Eagle's* springs—ropes fastened either to the anchor or the cable, and passed to the quarter, in order to sway the ship to one side or the other and bring the guns to bear on any desired point. Her commander, Lieutenant Henley, then cut his cable, sheeted home the top sails, ran behind the *Saratoga*, and took a position between her and the *Ticonderoga*, anchoring by the stern, which brought the fresh guns of her larboard battery to bear on the enemy, when they were served with good effect. The *Preble* was attacked by the enemy's gun boats, and driven from her position; but they were stopped by the next line, which they vainly tried to board. Every gun of the starboard battery—the side nearest the enemy—on the American flagship was disabled. Then MacDonough proceeded to 'wind ship', that is, to turn the vessel completely round by winding at the hawsers attached to the kedges. This was accomplished without accident, and his gunners, springing to the larboard battery, poured out fresh broadsides that made dreadful havoc with the *Confiance*. The commander of that vessel attempted to copy MacDonough's manœuver, for her battery on the side presented to the

enemy was also nearly used up, but failed, and two hours and a quarter after the fight began her colors came down. The remaining British vessels also surrendered, and the victory was complete."

Of this part of the battle, Christie says: "Shortly after the commencement of the fire from the *Confiance*, the gallant commander fell, and the command of the squadron devolved on Captain Pring, of the *Linnet*. The *Confiance* after the fall of Captain Downie, fought for some time most gallantly under the command of Lieut. Robertson, but was compelled to strike her colors to the enemy's ship, the *Saratoga*, which at one moment had slackened her fire, several of her guns being dismantled; she, however, cut her cable, winded her larboard broadside so as to bear on the *Confiance*, which being much shattered in her hull and injured in her rigging, endeavored in vain to effect the same movement. The *Finch* struck on a reef of rocks to the eastward of Crab Island early in the action, and was of no service in the engagement. The *Linnet* only remained. Captain Pring finding. not a hope remained of retrieving the disaster of the day, his men falling fast, was reluctantly compelled to give the painful orders to strike the colors."

Ingersoll is one of those that do not credit MacDonough with the idea of swinging the *Saratoga* around. He says:

"Three times MacDonough had been prostrated by falling spars, senseless on the deck of his ship,

fought almost to the water's edge, and incapable of further effort. An old seaman named Brun, the master, at that critical moment suggested the contrivance, by means of an anchor, to turn the ship around so as to bring into action the side remaining unimpaired, instead of that entirely useless. That movement being effected, a fresh broadside soon silenced the *Confiance*.....struck by more than a hundred large balls in her hull, her Captain killed, and half her crew killed or wounded, and her escape impossible, after more than two hours of the bravest, over-confident conflict, the first lieutenant, Robertson, hauled down the British flag. The other British vessels, sufferers in nearly similar proportions, all struck their colors.The officer commanding the British barges was accused by his own countrymen of cowardice, and so far countenanced the accusation as to abscond after a court-martial had been ordered for his trial. But to the Americans no such misconduct was evident. The barges, not anchored as the large vessels were, fought under sail and oars, but in close contact with our vessels, with no apparent indisposition to take their appropriate share of danger."

The turning manoeuver and the device to accomplish it may have been the thought of Brun. It is quite certain, however, that Ingersoll is mistaken when he says that Brun thought of the manoeuver in the heat of the battle and then made the device by

which it was executed. All the arrangements for the turning manoeuver were made before the battle began.

As for the part played by the barges, or gun boats, it is certain that they did not refuse to participate in the battle, as stated by Christie, who says that Captain Pring, who succeeded Downie in command of the British flotilla, found that "the gun boats had shamefully abandoned the object assigned to them, and were flying from the scene of action." In his report of the battle, Prevost says the gun boats sought safety in flight after the *Confiance* and *Linnet* had lowered their colors. This is undoubtedly the truth of the matter. When the *Confiance* and *Linnet* were out of the fight, there was choice of only one of two things for the gun boats to do—surrender or flee. Clearly they chose the proper alternative. It is certain, also, that in going to the battle ground the larger ships outstripped them and therefore they did not get into action as soon as the *Confiance*, or even the *Linnet* or *Preble*; but they got into action as soon as they could, and, when in, certainly did some fighting.

Several state a fact that may be an explanation of the belief of some that the gun boats did not fight well, or, as some state, did not fight at all. As revealed in the extract from Christie in this chapter, the usual British over-confidence—over-rating themselves and under-rating their foe—prevailed in the British flotilla. So confident were the British of the outcome of the battle that a vessel was loaded with certain civilians, includ-

ing some women, to follow the war ships, observe the combat, and participate in the triumphant rejoicings. Of course this vessel did not attempt to do the impossible—fight—and it wisely fled very early in the engagement.

The damage done to the American squadron proved that the British fought well. The British lost the action, not because they did not fight well, but because the Americans fought better. The British were as brave as the Americans, but the Americans were their superiors in tactics and resourcefulness. The *Confiance* received 105 round shot in her hull; the *Saratoga*, 55. The killed and wounded were as follows:

American Fleet		
SHIPS	KILLED	WOUNDED
<i>Saratoga</i>	23	29
<i>Eagle</i>	13	20
<i>Ticonderoga</i>	6	6
<i>Preble</i>	2	0
<i>Gun Boats</i>	3	3
Total	47	58
British Fleet		
<i>Confiance</i>	50	60
<i>Linnet</i>	20	30
<i>Chub</i>	6	10
<i>Finch</i>	8	10
<i>Gun Boats</i>	0	0
Total	84	110

Christie says that "the British loss in killed and wounded was 129, of which 3 officers, 38 men, were killed and one officer and 39 men wounded on the *Confiance*." These figures are certainly too low.

Neither Macomb nor Prevost gives any details in his account of the battle of the losses of the men on the fleets, nor does Yeo or Pring in his letter about the engagement. MacDonough was as modest, and almost as brief, as Perry. His letter to the Secretary of the Navy was as follows:

"The Almighty has been pleased to grant us a signal victory on Lake Champlain, in the capture of one frigate, one brig, and two sloops of war, of the enemy."

All, including Christie, speak of the *Confiance* as a frigate. It is interesting to know something of the size of this major fighting ship in 1814, which Downie considered an over-match for all of the American flotilla. As stated elsewhere, it was 160 feet long, by 40 foot beam. It had a crew of more than 300 men—picked men, largely from the high seas fleet anchored in the St. Lawrence, and who had participated in more than one naval battle.

As for the gun boats, we are, as previously stated, trustworthily informed that of the ten American gun boats, each of six "carried one long twenty-four, and an eighteen pound carronade, the others a long twelve each."

Of course such boats were not taken very seriously. They were propelled by oars as well as sail. Hence it is not strange that the American gun boats suffered total casualties of only six—three killed and three wounded. The fact that there were no casualties on the British gun boats might be considered good evidence of the charge that they did no fighting. But likely little attention was paid to them—it was well known that the task of the American fleet was to put the *Confiance* out of action. However, there is apparently quite a little to show that the British gun boats might have fought better. For one thing, they escaped, though in bad condition. Low says that the American “gallies” (gun boats) were “about pursuing those of the enemy, that were making their escape, but, it being discovered, that all the vessels* were in a sinking state, it became necessary to annul the signal to chase, and order the men from the gallies to the pumps. ‘I could only’, observed Com. MacDouough, ‘look at the enemy’s galleys going off in a shattered condition, for there was not a mast in either squadron that could stand to make sail on; the lower rigging being nearly all shot away, hung down as though it had just been placed over the mast heads.’” Christie explains that “the fire on both sides proved very destructive from the light airs and the smoothness of the water.”

The disparity in the flotillas was really greater than might appear from the foregoing. As Ingersoll

*The American ships; not the British gallies.

points out, the British "were able to go forth on the lake with not only more guns and men than we, but the great advantage of more and heavier guns on the decks of one and the same ship; not only more numerous crews, but veteran seamen, many of them fresh from their large ships of war at Quebec, commanded by officers of greater experience than ours, nearly all of the Americans being untried in action.....The American shipping.....manned by 850 men, many of them not seamen, and their marines supplied by soldiers from the army. The British squadron.....manned by 1,000 mostly tried and veteran seamen and officers."

In this connection, Ingersoll incidentally throws light on the alleged jealousy between the land and naval forces, which culminated in the letters of Yeo and Pring (to be quoted later) and the charges against Prevost. Ingersoll says:

"As soon as the Governor-General of Canada was reinforced by large bodies of Wellington's troops in July and August, fresh from their triumphs in Spain and France, he was ordered to carry the war into New York by way of Lake Champlain.....Positive orders were given to the quartermaster-general to suspend all other work, and every branch of service whatever that would interfere with the construction and the equipment of the frigate *Confiance*. Her size, tonnage and armament were all made so much greater than those of the largest American ship, the *Saratoga*,

as to leave no doubt of the capacity of the English vessel to overwhelm the American.....Early in August, Commodore Yeo, who commanded both Lake Ontario and Champlain, was called on by the Governor-General to put the Champlain division of his command under immediate orders for the contemplated service. Then it was that the jealousy between the sea and land officers, seldom sleeping, began to show itself. Yeo answered Prevost's importunity that the Champlain squadron had already nearly a hundred men more than its complement, and he sent Captain Downie, of the ship *Montreal*, to take the place of Captain Fisher, who had prepared the squadron for action. Disappointed by Yeo, the Governor-General applied to Admiral Otway, at Quebec, and Captain Lord James O'Brien, who instantly sent from their ships, the *Ajax* and *Warsprite*, the required supply of experienced seamen."

It is certain that the governor-general and commander-in-chief did not do anything to weaken the flotilla, but that he co-operated heartily to give it the greatest possible strength and efficiency. The taking for it of the best seamen on the warships in the *St. Lawrence*, has just been mentioned. Christie says:

"The flotilla at *Isle-aux-Noix* was necessary to co-operate with the land forces, and the Commissary-General and Quarter-Master-General, in order to expedite the new Frigate (the *Confiance*) were directed to suspend every other branch of the public service

which interfered with its equipment. Sir James L. Yeo was urged by the Commander of the Forces (early in August) to put this division of his command into an effective state, for the contemplated service. In answer to this, he was acquainted by the Commodore, that the squadron on Lake Champlain was already ninety men over complete, and immediately superseded Captain Fisher, who with much exertion had already prepared the flotilla for active service, appointing Captain Downie from the Lake Ontario squadron in his stead." Christie then goes on to state the facts about the sailors being brought from the Ajax and the Warsprite—this is quoted elsewhere.

Prevost has been blamed—and by the partisans of Yeo!—for removing Captain Fisher and bringing the sailors from the Ajax and Warsprite. They ignore that it was not Prevost, but Yeo, that was directly responsible for the removal of Fisher. There can be no question that Yeo was a patriotic Britisher, and that when he put Captain Downie in command he believed that he was doing what was best for the British expedition. Further, at the least there is no evidence to show that what he did was not to the benefit of the British flotilla. Some have sought to make much of the alleged strangeness of Captain Downie and the sailors of the fleet to each other, and of the lack of cordial feeling between the sailors originally on the lake and those from the St. Lawrence; but they have not brought forward the least evidence

of the lack of this cordial feeling, or that the lake and high seas seamen did not fight well together; nor have they produced the least evidence to show that the fleet would have been fought better if Captain Fisher had been in command. Downie and all the seamen under him fought like brave men; and no one can reasonably question in the least the sincere desire of both Yeo and Prevost to do everything possible to make the Plattsburg expedition a great success.

The only thing that can possibly appear to the discredit of the British, aside from their over-confidence, appears in the statement of Ingersoll that "contrary to naval usage, if not honor, there was a furnace in the *Confiance* to prepare red hot shot, several of which struck and set fire to the *Saratoga*." But there is, at the least, doubt about this, although later on Ingersoll says that "the *Saratoga* was twice on fire by perfidious hot shot from the *Confiance*." The writer of this has not found any complaint or criticism, because of the alleged furnace, from either MacDonough or Maccomb. It would appear to be a proper conclusion that Ingersoll was mistaken either about the furnace or about it being "contrary to naval usage, if not honor," at that time. It is safe to say that Ingersoll is not always accurate in his statements. Thus he says that "at break of day, on the 11th of September, the troops were all drawn out in expectation of the promised action on the water; but as the British ships did not appear, Sir George Prevost ordered the army to

return to their quarters and sent Commodore Downie the insulting message, that the army were all at their post at the time appointed by the navy, and the General hoped that nothing but weather had prevented the Commodore being as good as his word. Stung by that unmerited and harsh reproach, Downie hastened his attack, the only reply he deigned to give". It is true that Prevost did send the message quoted, but it is certain that he did not send this message the 11th, but at an earlier date.

It is easy to perceive that Prevost might have sent his message without any thought of reflecting on Downie, and that an oversensitive person could misinterpret Prevost's message. Likely it was far from Prevost's intent to insinuate that cowardice or procrastination or jealousy was responsible for Downie's delay. Likely he had in mind that the delay might be due to some discovered incompleteness or defect that must be remedied. If Downie interpreted Prevost's message as an insinuation reflecting on him, he chose to give to it a meaning rather forced and certainly not the only meaning it could have.

Some of the partisans of Downie blame Prevost because he did not begin the attack on land as soon as the *Confiance* rounded Cumberland Head and which was some time before the naval action began. They claim that Downie scaled his guns as he rounded the promontory and that this signal had been agreed upon between Downie and Prevost and that Prevost was to

attack as soon as this signal was given. Granting that Downie did scale his guns—the evidence as to this is not conclusive—the friends of Prevost are justified in their contention that scaling the guns (cleaning them with a light charge of powder) was only a precaution the competent commander took just before going into action and Downie's doing this need not be construed as a signal to Prevost. The preponderance of evidence is that he was to attack, not when Downie scaled his guns or when he appeared around Cumberland Head, but when he actually engaged the American flotilla.

The bitter controversy between the British land and naval forces, resulting in court-martials and long and bitter discussion in Canada and England, is proof of the very great importance the British attached to the battle of Plattsburg and their chagrin because of the result. Their notion of the battle was correct—the battle of Plattsburg was one of the most important ever fought; had it resulted in a British victory the political geography of North America, and probably of Europe, would be today far from what it is; and the resourcefulness, valor and patriotism of our forces in that battle, on both land and water, will inspire us to nobler, worthier deeds, in both peace and war, in proportion to our knowledge and appreciation of this momentous battle.

10.

THE LAND BATTLE OF SEPTEMBER 11

The reader doubtless has already a good idea of the topography of the battle ground of the 11th; but Ingersoll's description is so good that it will not be amiss to introduce it here, to refresh the memory, if that be necessary :

“The village of Plattsburg is situated on the west side of Lake Champlain; and a river called Saranac, on its way easterly, passes through the village, dividing it into two parts and emptying its waters into the bay, being a part of Lake Champlain. This stream for the distance of four miles, or more, in consequence of its rocky shores and bottom is rendered impassable by fording, and at that time there were but two places where they crossed it on bridges. On the south side of the stream, a short distance from the lower bridge, was the place selected for the forts, it being on an eminence commanding a view of the whole village. The inhabitants, together with the troops, threw down the upper bridge and took the plank off from the lower

one, and made every other arrangement to prevent the enemy from reaching the fort."

The anger of the British because of the stinging defeat at Plattsburg, became, shortly after that humiliating event, so bitter as to be unreasoning to the degree that some actually blamed, and scolded at, Maccomb for taking advantage of the topographical features of his battle ground, and spoke and wrote as if he was unfair in locating his works at the most advantageous point. They also scolded at MacDonough for placing his vessels just beyond the range of the British land batteries, yet so near the shore that the British fleet did not have every advantage!

It is now necessary, in order to understand fully the land battle of the 11th, to return to the controversy between the partisans of Prevost on the one hand and of Downie, Pring and Yeo on the other, which was, of course, at bottom between the British army and the British navy. . We must consider that the chagrin and humiliation of the British because of the Plattsburg defeat were indeed deep and poignant. Auchinleck says of the Plattsburg expedition, "We wish that it could be blotted from the page of English history." It is doubtful if any other event in the history of the British army or navy, before or since, was felt at the time to be as disgraceful or occasioned as much resentment. New Orleans was tempered by the victory on the right bank of the Mississippi and by the victories before and after, part of the same cam-

paign. But the Plattsburg expedition was defeat, felt to be shameful, and only defeat. That the British flotilla, superior in every particular except the character of the seamen, and a part of the proud and arrogant British navy that for years had flouted international law, and "had driven every other flag from the seas", should be so decisively beaten was disgrace enough; but that the very best of Wellington's famous Peninsular army, that the British were cocksure were the best soldiers in the history of the world, should be compelled to retreat, losing most of their stores, and leaving their wounded and dead behind, and be thus defeated by less than one third of their number, and of troops to which the British had applied the terms of disdain and ridicule, was, indeed, enough to bring to any people the keenest chagrin and humiliation! The mortification and anger of the British were all the greater because they had regarded and published the Plattsburg campaign as their most important undertaking of the War. They had not the least doubt of its success, and they were just as certain that its success, which would cut the United States in half militarily and materially, would also divide it politically, and thus would add New England and much or all of New York to the British Kingdom, while the remainder of the United States would be forced to make an ignominious peace, and would be so weak that it would really be an humble vassal state until again restored to the mother country.

Well has it been said that the land battle on the 11th was "a most interesting conflict. On the one side, the best troops of Britain led on by her most consummate officers—men and officers selected from those soldiers, who, under the command of the Duke of Wellington, had acquired the character of 'invincible', men who had conquered in Portugal, Spain, France, and the Indies; on the other side, men not reared to arms, not used to battle, most of them born since their sires had immortalized themselves in combat on the same ground, the descendants of the 'Green Mountain Boys' and of those heroes who conquered at Saratoga. The object of the contest was great; on it was to hang, probably, every future event of the war."

Out of the feeling between the British army and navy, intensified and embittered by the disgrace of the defeat, came the charge from the navy that the army did not attack as soon as the fleet appeared around Cumberland Head; that the army did not fight during the naval combat; that the army fled ingloriously as soon as the naval combat was finished; and that notwithstanding the defeat on the lake, the land forces could have defeated and captured the American army and certainly should have done so. The army replied that it was well understood that the victory of the ships was vital, and that the army would have invited disaster had it remained where it was, with a victorious American flotilla to carry and land troops at any point on the lake; that the army

went into action, and with the utmost vigor, as soon as it understood that it was to give battle; that Downie did not send to Prevost the promised notice that he would attack at a certain hour; and that the army certainly fought as well as the navy, and, instead of retreating as soon as the naval battle was finished, which was at 11:15 a. m., it fought throughout the day, until five in the evening.

Thirteen days after the battle on the lake, Sir James Lucas Yeo, who signed himself "Commodore and Commander-in-Chief," on his flagship penned this official letter:

"I have the honor to submit, for the information of the lords commissioners of the admiralty, a copy of a letter from Captain Pring, late Commander of his majesty's brig, Linnet.

"It appears to me, and I have good reasons to believe, that Captain Downie was urged and his ship hurried into action, before she was in a fit state to meet the enemy.

"I am also of opinion that there was not the least necessity for our squadron giving the enemy such decided advantages, by going into their bay to engage them. Even had they been successful, it would not in the least have assisted the troops in storming the batteries; whereas had our troops taken their batteries first, it would have obliged the enemy's squadron to quit the bay, and give ours a fair chance".

In his report of the battle, Prevost said:

“On the morning of the 11th, our flotilla was seen over the isthmus which joins Cumberland-head with the mainland, steering for Plattsburg bay. I immediately ordered that part of the brigade under Major-General Robinson, which had been brought forward, consisting of our light infantry companies, third battalion 27th and 76th regiments, and Major-General Powers’ brigade, consisting of the third, fifth, and the first battalion of the 27th and the 58th regiment, to force the fords by the Saranac, and advance, provided with scaling ladders, to escalate the enemy’s works upon the heights; this force was placed under the command of Major-General Robinson. The batteries opened their fire the instant the ships were engaged.

“It is now with deep concern I inform your lordship, that notwithstanding the intrepid valor with which Captain Downie led his flotilla into action, my most sanguine hopes of complete success were not long afterwards blasted, by a combination, as appeared to us, of unfortunate events, to which naval warfare is peculiarly exposed. Scarcely had his majesty’s troops forced a passage across the Saranac, and ascended the heights on which stand the enemy’s works, when I had the extreme mortification to hear the shout of victory from the enemy’s works, in consequence of the British flag being lowered on board the *Confiance* and *Linnet*, and to see our gunboats seeking their safety in flight. This unlooked-for

event deprived me of the co-operation of the fleet, without which the future prosecution of the service was become impracticable. I did not hesitate to arrest the course of the troops advancing to attack, because the most complete success would have been unavailing, and the possession of the enemy's works offered no advantage to compensate for the loss we must have sustained in acquiring possession of them.

"I have ordered the batteries to be dismantled, the guns withdrawn, and the baggage, with the wounded men who can be removed to be sent to the rear, in order that the troops may return to the Chazy tomorrow and the following day to Champlain, where I propose to halt until I have ascertained the use the enemy propose making of the naval ascendancy they have acquired on Lake Champlain."

We will stop for a moment here to note that in this dispatch, written when the sting of defeat was keenest, Prevost, far from trying to put any blame on Downie or his men, sought to excuse the naval defeat, as due to "a combination of unfortunate events to which naval warfare is peculiarly exposed". It must be said that the more one studies this brave, generous, chivalrous man, the more one comes to admire him, and the less patience one has with his critics that hounded him to an untimely death—critics either inexcusably ignorant and unintelligent or infamously malignant, or both.

It is now timely to quote from Macomb's official report of the land battle of the 11th:

"About eight in the morning of the 11th, as we expected, the flotilla appeared in sight around Cumberland Head, and at nine bore down and engaged at anchor in the bay off the town. At the same instant the batteries were opened on us, and continued throwing bomb-shells, shrapnells, bombs and Congreve rocketts, until sun-set, when the bombardment ceased, every battery of the enemy being silenced by the superiority of our fire. The naval engagement lasted but two hours, in full view of both armies. Three efforts were made by the enemy to pass the river at the commencement of the cannonade and bombardment, and they prepared for that work an immense number of scaling-ladders. One attempt was made to cross at the village bridge, another at the upper bridge and a third at a ford about three miles from the works. At the first two he was repulsed by the regulars—at the third by the brave volunteers and militia, where he suffered severely in killed and wounded, and prisoners; a considerable body crossed the stream, but were either killed, taken or driven back. The woods at this place were very favorable to the operation of the militia. A whole company of the 76th regiment was here destroyed, the three Lieutenants and 27 men prisoners, the Captain and the rest killed. I cannot forego the pleasure of here stating the gallant conduct of Captain M'Glassin, of the 15th

regiment, who was ordered to ford the river, and attack a party constructing a battery on the right of the enemy's line, within 500 yards of Fort-Brown, which he handsomely executed at midnight, with 50 men; drove off the working party, consisting of 150 men, and defeated a covering party of the same number, killing one officer and sixteen in the charge, and wounding many. At dusk the enemy withdrew his artillery etc."

We have given the conclusion of Macomb's dispatch just as written. Undoubtedly the exploit of Captain M'Glassin was at some midnight, as stated, and not during the battle of the 11th.

It will be observed that both Prevost and Macomb say that the British land forces vigorously attacked the moment the action on the lake began.

It will be observed, further, that Macomb and Prevost do not exactly agree as to the progress made by the British soldiers during the battle. Both say that British soldiers succeeded in crossing the Saranac. From the dispatch of Sir George Prevost it might be inferred that his troops were generally successful in crossing the river and were ready to escalate the works when the naval defeat induced him to call back his forces. Some have reached this conclusion from his dispatch. Macomb's report indicates rather that the British succeeded in crossing the river at only one point—the ford—and that even here the Americans had decidedly the best of the fighting. A

careful examination of all the accounts of the battle will show that the account given by Macomb is correct. Likely Prevost thought it not improper to soften the defeat by exaggerating the exploits of the troops.

It will be seen that the charge made by the British navy, that the land forces did not co-operate, was false. The troops got into action as soon as the naval battle began, and they fought bravely and vigorously. Furthermore, they fought bravely, even desperately, as long as the naval conflict lasted, and they stopped fighting only when ordered to withdraw by their wise and capable commander-in-chief. Yet further, it is certain that a considerable force of the British troops fought, as stated by Macomb, until sun-down. This was undoubtedly done to permit of the removal of some of the stores and the guns in the batteries, and also to exhaust the Americans and their scant ammunition to such an extent that the British troops could retreat to the Chazy without serious attack and loss.

Undoubtedly both the British sailors and soldiers were brave and fought well indeed. They were worthy of the reputation the one had gained on the high seas and the other in the Peninsula. But they were out-matched—if not in bravery, then in initiative, resource and intelligence. As at New Orleans four months later, the British fought by rote. In the woods at the Saranac they fought as they had fought in Spain and Portugal and the Garonne. If they had learned

anything from defeat at Fort DuQuesne or, later, during the Revolution, they had forgotten it. The intelligent, thinking American troops were commanded by a general that threw to the winds half the rules then laid down for land fighting, adapted to his advantage all the natural features of the battle ground, and made able and original use of the circumstances in his favor as well as of his limited resources. The British commanders and forces were indeed good. But the Americans were better.

And none were better than the volunteers that a few days before received the rebuke of even the generous Macomb. It was they that on the 11th were "brave", and successfully held the most difficult post—the ford. It was easier to hold back the British where the bridges had been for the stream was deeper there, its banks were steep and rocky—there it was not considered fordable—and the planks of the bridges had been made into effective barricades. Further, this ford was "about three miles from the works"—the volunteers and militia were far removed from the support of the regulars, were hid from them by the woods, and lacked the support and encouragement from both the works and the fleet that the regulars had. Yet they fought so well that the few British troops that succeeded in crossing the Saranac at the ford, were annihilated. The few days of actual training given them by Macomb had made these militia

and volunteers as good soldiers as any in the world at that time.

Ingersoll's description of the land battle is so entertaining that another quotation is certainly allowable:

"The surrounding hills were crowded with combatants or spectators. The British land batteries opened their bombardment on the American redoubts of bombs, shrapnells and rockets, which the forts returned with interest. Attempts at the ford and bridges to force a passage across the Saranac were repulsed; one at the village, a second at an upper bridge, and a third at a ford three miles above. The British with scaling ladders trying all those approaches were always repulsed by the regulars or militia; and the few that got over were instantly killed or taken."

The author of the Low history is always fair to the British—at times it seems that he had a British leaning. His account confirms what has preceded. He says:

"At the same hour that the fleets engaged, the enemy opened his batteries on the American forts, throwing hundreds of shells, balls and rockets; and attempted, at the same time, to cross the Saranac river, at three different points, to assault the American works. At the upper ford he was met by the Vermont volunteers and New York militia. . . . The enemy fire was returned with effect from the batteries; by sunset seven of his newly raised batteries were

silenced, and he was seen retiring to his camp. Beaten by land and by water, the British governor-general withdrew his artillery, and raised the siege. Under favor of a dark night he sent off his heavy baggage, and retreated with his whole army, towards Canada, leaving his wounded in the field, and a vast quantity of provisions and munitions of war, which he had not time to destroy. The light troops, volunteers and militia pursued him on the following day, capturing several soldiers and covering the escape of a great number of deserters; bad weather prevented the pursuit to be continued beyond the Chazy. Thus has 14,000 regulars with the best British officers, and the best military equipment, been beaten by a regular force of only 1,500 men, and 2,500 militia and volunteers; the militia commanded by Gen. Mooers, and the volunteers by General Strong. The enemy having retired from republican ground, the militia and volunteers were dismissed."

As stated in an early chapter, in New York and Vermont as well as in Massachusetts, and the other New England states, it was held that the militia or volunteers could not be sent beyond the United States, by even the national government. But aside from this, the forces under Macomb were so weak compared with the British that to have made any greater pursuit than was made, would have been foolhardy. Macomb was in no position to attempt the capture of Prevost's army, or any considerable part of it; just as MacDonough re-

ported that when, at the close of the naval battle, he looked around for vessels to pursue the fleeing British galleys, he found that he had none in condition for pursuit.

Ingersoll says of the British retreat: "As soon as the dusk of the evening added its pall, the renowned veterans of Wellington fled with such haste and dread that they got back to Chazy, eight miles from Plattsburg, before their retreat was discovered. Leaving their sick and wounded, with a note requesting General Macomb's care of them, vast quantities of provisions and ammunition, entrenching tools of all sorts, tents, marquees, upon the ground, and considerable quantities buried under it, or thrown into the water, the strongest British army that ever invaded any part of the United States north of the Hudson, which was by that river to sunder the states, took to flight from less than 2,300 recruits, many of them invalids of the American army, but bravely commanded and reinforced by what were called a rabble of militia. As soon as this flight was discovered, the panic-stricken British were pursued by the militia, although not one fourth of their number till they found sanctuary beyond their own borders".

Ingersoll, if not always exactly correct, is always animated.

The official returns of the loss of the American regulars were 1 subaltern, 1 sergeant, 1 musician, and

34 privates killed—total, 37; 2 subalterns, 1 sergeant-major, 4 sergeants, 2 corporals, 4 musicians and 49 privates wounded—total, 62. Total killed, wounded, and missing, 119.

There is no complete report of the losses of the militia and volunteers.

Apparently the only report of the British losses on land was a partial one that Prevost enclosed with his report written the evening of the 11th. In closing that report he wrote:

“I have the honor to transmit herewith returns of the loss sustained by the left division of this army in its advance to Plattsburg, and in forcing a passage across the Saranac river.”

The returns mentioned were signed by “Edw. Baynes, Adj.-Gen. N. A.” and read as follows:

“Return of killed and wounded.—2 captains, 1 ensign, 4 sergeants, 30 rank and file, 1 horse, killed; 1 general staff, 1 captain, 6 lieutenants, 7 sergeants, 135 rank and file, 2 horses, wounded; 4 lieutenants, 2 sergeants, 1 drummer, 48 rank and file, 6 horses, missing.

“Missing—76th foot;—Lieutenants G. Hutch, G. Ogilvie, and E. Marchington.

“Canadian Chasseurs;—Lieut. E. Vigneau”.

In explanation of only a partial return being reported by Prevost, it is to be said that Prevost wrote his report the evening of the 11th, after an all-day battle, and during the confusion of retreat.

The Low history states that General Macomb put the total "loss of the enemy, on the land and lake, at not less than 2,500 men." This included, of course, prisoners and deserters.

Christie gives an interesting account of the land battle of the 11th, and we may be sure that it is as favorable to the British as the facts would warrant. It will be noted that Christie states positively that the British troops went into action as soon as the naval engagement opened; also, that the Americans had taken full advantage of the natural features of the battle ground and had shown consummate skill in the location of their works and the disposition of men and guns. Christie says:

"The batteries on shore were put into action against the enemy's line of fortifications, as soon as the enemy's ships commenced firing. As the approach to the front of their works was rough and exposed to a fire of grape and musketry, as well as a flank fire from a Block-House, a column of assault, under Major-General Robinson, was ordered to move by the rear of their bivouacs, the better to conceal their movements, and cross a ford previously reconnoitered, some distance up the Saranac; thence to penetrate through the wood to a clear space of ground in the vicinity of the enemy's position, where the necessary preparations might be made to carry their works by assault on their reverse front.

“The second brigade under Major-General Brisbane, was so distributed as to create a diversion in favor of the column under Major-General Robinson, which, through the mistake of the guides, had been led upon a wrong path and missed the ford. Before the error was rectified by a countermarch, shouts of **huzzah** were distinctly heard by this column in the direction of the American works. To have carried these works would have been no difficult task for the brave troops composing this column, but their attainment after the loss of the squadron, could not have been attended with any permanent advantage. Orders were, therefore, sent to General Robinson (who, upon hearing the shouts, had halted and sent to Head-Quarters, to ascertain the cause and to receive such further orders from the Commander of the Forces as was necessary) to return with his column. The loss of the squadron gave the enemy the means of conveying their troops to such points as might be deemed expedient, and the numerous reinforcements which momentarily crowded in, gave them a great disposable force, whose superiority in numbers was such, that a delay of a few hours might place the British in a critical position. So circumstanced, the army, indignant at being obliged to retire before an enemy their inferior in discipline and renown, fell back upon Chazy in the evening, with little molestation from the Americans. On the ensuing day they continued their retreat towards the lines, bringing away such of the

ordnance and commissariat stores as had not been injured by the rain which, from the commencement of the invasion, and during the retreat of the army, had been almost incessant."

Christie is, of course, amusing, though commendable, in his efforts to excuse the retreat of the land forces. His assertion that reinforcements were coming in so fast that in a few hours the British might have been outnumbered is, of course, ridiculous. As a matter of fact, no reinforcements were in sight. At the best, they could have been only a few of the despised raw volunteers and militia. Equally amusing is what Christie says of the rain. That rain, we may be sure, fell on the just as well as the British, but Macomb nowheres complains of it—he does not even mention it. The truth is that the battle was regarded as such a disgrace to the British that even as fair and honorable a soldier as Christie felt compelled to find some excuse. We cannot blame Christie for his attempt; and, considering that the best fighters are frequently not highly skilled in the use of the tongue or the pen, he should not be blamed that his effort to excuse the British troops is almost as great a failure as their part in the battle.

The humiliation of both the British naval and land forces, and the bitterness that grew out of it, led Auchinleck, who up to this time had been an ardent admirer of Sir George Prevost, to make an unfair at-

tack on that commander, in his history of the war. Auchinleck says:

"Sir George Prevost's dispatches all tend to prove the correctness of Captain Pring's statement, that the attacks were to be simultaneous; and so confident of this was poor Captain Downie that he addressed his men to this effect before going into action: 'My lads, we shall be immediately assisted by the army on shore, let us show them that our part of the duty is well done.' This presumption on the part of Downie was fully warranted by Sir George's plans, and it is therefore a most extraordinary fact, that a general, who had on previous occasions proved himself a brave and energetic officer, should have on this occasion by his indecision and timidity have cast a lasting slur on himself and the army under his command."

Auchinleck proceeds to criticize Prevost and his army because they did not get into action when the naval battle begun and because they did not continue to fight. But we now know that Prevost stated the fact when he reported that he, when Downie began his battle, "immediately ordered . . . to force the fords of the Saranac . . . The batteries opened their fire the instant the ships engaged". Gen. Macomb said in his report, "at the same instant the batteries were opened on us." Further, by referring back to Macomb's report it will be seen that he stated that the land battle lasted throughout the day, and this is confirmed by the most trustworthy reports of others.

The British soldiers fought well and hard. Prevost, generous and magnanimous, to minimize the defeat of his soldiers minimized the land engagement of the 11th. He put no blame, as we have already seen, on Downie or any one under him, and he puts no blame on any member, officer or private, of the land forces. He assumes full responsibility. Auchinleck accuses him of indecision and timidity. We know how unjust are those accusations. He was certainly neither timid nor undecided in his actions previous to the 11th. He was not guilty of timidity or indecision when he ordered his forces into action the instant the naval battle began. Nor was he guilty of indecision or timidity when, as he reported, he "did not hesitate to arrest the course of the troops advancing to the attack", when the British flotilla was defeated.

The quarrel between the partisans of Downie and Prevost would not warrant so much space did it not afford such excellent evidence of the importance the British attached to the Plattsburg expedition—the most important expedition of the war, Auchinleck says—and the British realization of the completeness of their extraordinary defeat.

As already noted, at Plattsburg there was no partial success, as there was at New Orleans and elsewhere, to relieve the defeat and lessen the humiliation.

While Prevost doubtless ordered back Robinson, it is equally true that, as Macomb stated in his report,

"the batteries continued throwing bombshells, shrapnells, balls and Congreve rockets until sunset"; and Macomb was not far wrong when he continued in his report, that "when the bombardment ceased, every battery of the enemy being silenced by the superiority of our fire". Prevost doubtless ordered the dismantling of the batteries, as he says; but before he had done so, the Americans had made the work rather easy.

In concluding this topic, we heartily agree with the interesting and edifying historian, Auchinleck, that "it must not be supposed that in the attempt to vindicate the conduct of the sailors, we intend to cast any reflection whatsoever on the troops. No, the men who had braved danger in many a well fought field in the Peninsula, and who had shared in the perils of Burgos, Badajoz, and St. Sebastian, were not likely to be daunted by the feeble opposition offered by fifteen hundred of the refuse of the American army."

We are again pleased to record our opinion that both the British sailors and soldiers were brave and capable and fought well indeed—their losses of ships and men are proof of that. It is a great temptation to suggest that the heroes of Badajoz might have fought better if "beauty and booty" had been in prospect; but there is no evidence that the British soldiers hesitated to incur any risk that they were called on to take in the battle, and it is certain that when sailors fight until their vessels are disabled or soldiers

all day until their batteries are silenced, they must be given, as we give them gladly, full credit for being brave men indeed.

They were defeated because the British were outgeneraled and outfought. All agree that MacDonough made the best possible arrangement of his ships. He selected his battle ground with the greatest wisdom. He put Downie at a disadvantage from the beginning, and he fought his ships with greater skill than the British did theirs. He proved himself to be the superior tactician and commander. Prevost was not utterly incompetent, as Auchinleck bitterly declares, and it is not true that he "did not evince on this occasion the smallest combination of plan, or sign of execution." We know that in his march to the Saranac, his erection of batteries on the north bank, his disposition of his forces, and his orders of the 11th, he was working out a carefully conceived plan, and that he showed unusual executive ability in putting his plans into effect. But in both plans and execution he was surpassed by Macomb.

Prevost had an army of Wellington's "invincibles." They were outfought by less than one third of their number, and by "the refuse of the American army" and a "rabble" of raw militia and volunteers—men of whom their commander said with justice and without exaggeration that "the militia behaved with great spirit after the first day and the volunteers of Vermont were exceedingly serviceable"; "the brave

volunteers and militia", who opposed the British at the ford, where the British "suffered severely in killed, and wounded, and prisoners"; and regulars, that held the British at the bridges and silenced by superior fire the British batteries that were so far superior in cannon. The memory of these American regulars, militia and volunteers may well enthuse and inspire, and will enthuse and inspire, our brave regulars. militia and volunteers of today.

It is only justice to the British soldiers and sailors and to Christie himself, that we quote from the history of this Canadian officer, a courteous gentleman, what he wrote about the battle of Plattsburg, and the controversy that grew out of it:

"The Naval Commander in the Canadas, in his official letter to the Admiralty, did not scruple to attribute the loss of the lake squadron to the misconduct of the Commander of the Forces. The opinion of that officer, remote from the place of action, and of which he had no local knowledge, must necessarily have relied on the statements of others; and when we consider the variance in the relation of facts, as given by those immediately concerned, an impartial person will pause in forming an opinion. In justification of the conduct of Captain Downie, it has been said that he was hurried into action before his ship was in a state to meet the enemy, and that the Commander of the Forces failed to give the proper co-operation to the fleet, by not commencing an assault upon the bat-

teries, upon a signal given by the *Confiance*, in consequence of which the whole attention of the enemy was directed against the fleet. That if the land batteries had been assaulted in time, the American fleet would have been compelled to leave the bay, when they might have been attacked by the British squadron on the open lake to much better advantage. On the other hand, it has been urged that Captain Downie so far from being hurried into action, entertained the fullest confidence in the superiority of his squadron, and that he felt equally certain of success whether he should meet the enemy on the open lake, or attack them at anchor in Plattsburg bay. That there was no signal agreed upon between the commander of the land forces and Captain Downie; and that the circumstances of his scaling the guns was considered by the former as no more than the usual precaution before the commencement of a naval action. That the storming of the works on shore could not have been of any service to the British squadron, as the American ships during the action, were moved out of range of the land batteries. That it would have been imprudent to have carried the American batteries before the naval ascendancy should have been decided, as the enemy's squadron, after such an event, by retiring to the narrows of the Lake, before the British squadron should have been off Plattsburg, to intercept their retreat, might have secured themselves against every future effort to attack them to advantage. Amidst the

contradictory relations of facts and diversity of opinions, which have been given from responsible authority, spectators of the event, it is difficult to say what were the grand errors which occasioned the failure of the expedition to Plattsburg, or whether it may not be considered as one of those misfortunes incidental to warfare, which human prudence can neither see nor prevent".

To this may well be added the fine comment of the American author of Low's history: "For two hours and fifteen minutes the contest was maintained, with an obstinacy which, while it added to, or rather perfected, the renown already acquired by the American seamen, did not disgrace the vanquished."

11.

AFTER THE BATTLE

The British land forces not only lost the greater part of their stores, but, like the naval forces, had to leave their wounded and dead to the care of the Americans.

As already stated, Captain Pring succeeded to the command of the British squadron on the death of Captain Downie. In his official report of the battle, Captain Pring closed with the statement that he had "much satisfaction in making known the humane treatment the wounded have received from Commodore MacDonough. They were immediately removed to his own hospital on Coral Island, and furnished with every requisite. His generous and polite attention to myself, the officers and the men, will ever hereafter be gratefully remembered."

Captain Pring was court-martialled, but this disgraced, not him, but the British responsible for it. He was a brave and generous officer, as his conduct the

day of the battle and the quotation above, made manifest.

It is indeed gratifying that it can be recorded that, notwithstanding the atrocities to which our wounded were subjected at the hands of the Indians of the British armies, or the neglect to bury our dead, our forces always treated the British wounded with generous care and the British dead with decent respect. Even after the gross excesses of the Chesapeake expedition and the burning of our national capitol, our forces gave in full measure the treatment of a civilized and Christian people to the British wounded and dead, which, as already stated, were abandoned by the British in their flight. In speaking of the feeling of the British army about the abandoned wounded, "A Subaltern in America" says: "Yet no apprehension could be more unfounded in the humanity of their conduct towards such English soldiers as fell into their hands, the Americans can be surpassed by no people whatever. To this the wounded whom we were compelled to abandon bore, after their release, ample testimony; and they told a tale which hundreds besides have corroborated". Again, in speaking of the battle of Baltimore, September 12th—the day after the battle of Plattsburg—he said:

"Nor did it appear to us as being the least remarkable feature in the case that not one of the (British) slain was stripped. They had laid already some

hours exposed, yet . . . they still lay, as they had fallen."

This British historian wrote of the operations of the British army that burned the national capitol and attacked Baltimore, that they "reminded me more of the operations of the ancient Danes against Alfred and his subjects, than anything in the annals of modern and civilized warfare."* Yet when this army was compelled to abandon its wounded after these operations those wounded that could be moved were returned to the British as they were about to sail to Jamaica, in

*It is proper to state here that this British soldier speaks in high terms of the militia that fought at Bladensburg to defend the national capitol. This is true of the other British soldiers that wrote of this campaign. They all agree that the militia fought remarkably well, and the severe losses of the British are conclusive evidence of this. It was left to our own American historians (!) to dishonor our brave soldiers, including the dead and wounded, to write that our militia fled like cowards and as a panic-stricken rabble. This infamous work of slandering our soldiers has been done, not by their British foemen, but by Americans! "A Subaltern in America" speaks in words of praise of the conduct of the militia while marvelling at the utter inefficiency and stupidity of their high officers, who were so utterly incompetent that, for example, they made no attempt to defend the easily defended town of Bladensburg! Many of the officers commanding our militia and volunteers were fine examples of the officers that can boast of only two things military—gold braid and a sword; politicians put in command of soldiers because of partisan fidelity and political activity; the pets of the smugly complacent mediocre war department of a national administration, the head of which was opposed to war, had begun war reluctantly, and apparently had been made to believe that he was its pastmaster.

this wise as narrated by this same generous British soldier:

"A beautiful schooner, carrying a white flag at her main-topmost head, shot after us from the Patuxent; she overtook us just as we were preparing to bring up for the night, and great was the joy of everyone on board, when it appeared that she was the bearer of the majority of the men and officers who had been left behind wounded at Bladensburg. Among the individuals thus restored to the army were Colonels Thornton and Wood. Major Brown's hurts were too serious to admit of his removal."

Certainly an officer could hardly have had less right to expect any humane treatment from the Americans than Colonel Thornton; yet he was given the best of medical treatment and of care, and was returned to his friends—there was no exchange of prisoners, for the victorious* (according to most of our school histories!) British army had no prisoners to exchange. And it was he that commanded the victorious British troops in the battle of New Orleans—on the right bank of the Mississippi.

The treatment Macomb and MacDonough gave the wounded and dead abandoned by Prevost was

*Let it be said to the honor of the brave British soldiers that wrote of this army that they never claimed that it was victorious. That claim was left for American writers whose statements are as false as they are disgraceful to their renegade authors.

strikingly similar to that described above. Ingersoll says:

"The Thursday after the Sunday of MacDonough's victory, was consecrated by him to the pious and exemplary duty of interning together the Americans and British who fell on Lake Champlain. MacDonough and his officers, with the remains of their honored dead, were towed in their boats from the *Saratoga* to the *Confiance*. The *Saratoga* fired minute guns as the boats with measured strokes of the oarsmen rowed from the victor to the vanquished ship. From the *Confiance* the British dead and surviving officers were received in the American boats with the attention and honors due to unfortunate brave men; and the procession of boats slowly moved to the place of internment ashore.

"Numerous escorts of infantry and artillery from the army, waited their landing on shore, and joining the procession, while minute guns from the forts accompanied the firing from the shipping. Crowds of the neighboring people followed, in respectful silence, to the public burial-ground, where the funeral service was performed, and closed by discharges of fire arms over the graves, in which those who slew each other were laid together.

"Honors due to unfortunate, brave men."

These words of even the prejudiced Ingersoll show how the brave British soldiers and sailors were regarded by their foes, and shame any thought that, after a hundred years, is not kind and generous.

With the bodies of the British our soldiers and sailors buried all enmity toward them, and from the grave sprang the friendship which has endured for a century.

Surely at least the descendants of those generous and chivalrous soldiers and sailors may fervently hope that that friendship may be yet closer and firmer, and never be broken.

12.

“THE END OF THE MATTER”

As we now know, our brave soldiers and sailors—generous and chivalrous, as the brave always are—did not hesitate to give honor to brave foes, living or dead; and the bravest of the brave of Wellington’s Peninsular Army, being also generous and chivalrous, were ready and glad to bear testimony to the valor and nobility of their foe.

Neither Americans nor British thought that honor must be withheld from the brave because they had fought their foes!

That absurd notion has been reserved for a hundred years later. Needless to say that in nearly every case, if not every case, those that would translate it into acts to deprive the brave of honor, to prohibit the recital of the deeds of those who have fought and died for their country, are those who have not fought themselves, nor have any of their ancestors fought, for the United States.

It is also significant that many of these show the over-zeal that the spy and traitor always show, the better, as they think, to hide their real character; and some there are whose deeds and many words might stamp them as renegades—false to weak and long-oppressed peoples.

He that would withhold honor from the brave would dishonor the brave. He that would withhold honor from his brave countrymen is little removed, if at all, from a traitor. He that opposes the recital of the brave deeds of his countrymen opposes the best evangel of patriotism.

If we are loyal, true Americans, we will diligently study the history of our "Second War of Independence"—the War of 1812—one of the most important wars ever fought, and fought well.

It is not to the disgrace of the soldiers and sailors of that war that grievous injustice has been done them by envious and traitorous pens. The disgrace is to their countrymen that have permitted this. It is not to their shame that those that enjoy the form of government and structure of society they fought to secure, are indifferent to their glorious deeds. The shame is to them that should jealously preserve a knowledge of those deeds as a sacred heritage. Not the dead, but the living, are dishonored.

It is not their dishonor, but the disgrace of the people of the United States, that some of our most pretentious encyclopedias and most used school his-

tories are so unjust to the soldiers and sailors of our Second War of Independence that they do not mention the land fighting of the battle of Plattsburg at all!

That is true—almost incredible as it is, and altogether disgraceful and shameful.

The shame and disgrace of the British defeat at Plattsburg was not as deep as is the shame and disgrace of our ignorance and neglect of the bravery of our soldiers and sailors in that battle.

And of other battles of that war as well. Yet even more: Some, not content with silence about and ignorance of the glorious deeds of our soldiers and sailors in that war, have, like foul ghouls that would mutilate and dishonor the dead, written lies that reek and drip with vileness.*

This is written in an hour of great national peril. And, also, there is never an hour in the life of a nation that is unprepared to defend itself, that is not an hour of peril.

*As malodorous an example of this as perhaps can be found, is a certain miscalled history of the U. S., given a forced circulation by those that probably were actuated by unworthy motives. This makes it indeed regrettable that the book had for its apparent object the advancement of a most worthy movement—that for universal military training. The achievements of the raw troops at Plattsburg furnish no argument against universal military training. They were accustomed to the rifle, and to hardships. Warfare in 1814 was indeed simple as compared with today. Every American youth should have military training for his individual benefit and the safety of the nation.

The greatest danger in any hour of peril of any nation is within it—lack of patriotism. Without patriotism a nation will not make the sacrifices of ease and wealth and ambition and life that every nation must make if it escapes decline and dishonor, protects the weak, stands effectively for justice, and leads on to liberty and democracy.

The fundamental need of every nation is patriotism. And all history shows that the greatest inspiration to patriotism, the greatest fount of patriotism, is knowledge of and honor to those that have given to their country "the last full measure of devotion."

United

Two Empires by the Sea,
Two Nations great and free
 One Anthem raise.
One race of ancient fame,
One tongue, one faith, we claim.
One God, whose glorious name
 We love and praise.

* * * * *

Now may the God above
Guard the dear lands we love,
 Both East and West.
Let love more fervent glow,
As peaceful ages go,
And strength yet stronger grow,
 Blessing the blest.

The above was sung at the Blessing of the (American)
Flags in St. Paul's Cathedral when the first American soldiers
reached London.

The Marsellaise

Ye sons of France, awake to glory!
Hark! Hark! What myriads bid you rise!
Your children, wives, and grandsires hoary:
Behold their tears, and hear their cries,
Behold their tears, and hear their cries!
Shall hateful tyrants mischief breeding,
With hireling hosts, a ruffian band,
Affright and desolate the land,
While peace and liberty lie bleeding?
To arms, to arms, ye brave!
Th' avenging sword unsheathe!
March on, march on, all hearts resolved
On victory or death!

Oh Liberty! can man resign thee,
Once having felt thy generous flame?
Can dungeons, bolts and bars confine thee?
Or whips thy noble spirit tame,
Or whips thy noble spirit tame?
Too long the world has wept bewailing
That falsehood's dagger tyrants wield;
But freedom is our sword and shield,
And all their arts are unavailing:
To arms, to arms, ye brave!
Th' avenging sword unsheathe!
March on, march on, all hearts resolved
On victory or death!

The author of the above was Captain Rouget de Lisle, stationed at Strasburg (Alsace), in 1792. He wrote the stirring words and the music in April of that year, and entitled the production "A War Song for the Army of the Rhine." Because it was first heard in Paris when sung there by the Revolutionary deputation of Marseilles, it was called the "Marseilles Hymn", and is now popularly named "The Marsellaise."

The Star Spangled Banner

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen thro' the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected, now shines on the stream:
'Tis the star-spangled banner: oh, long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footstep's pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Oh, thus be it ever when freeman shall stand
Between their loved home and wild war's desolation;
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the power that has made and preserv'd us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust!"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.



The War of 1812 gave to our beloved country its national anthem. Doubtless every American knows that the words were written by Francis Scott Key of Baltimore, during the bombardment of Fort McHenry, near Baltimore, by the British, shortly after the battle of Plattsburg; but probably all do not know that the music is an old French air, long known in England as "Anacreon", and afterwards in America as "Adams and Liberty". This is another example of the many things we owe to the genius and art of the French.

Our Toast

Here's to the blue of the wind-swept North
When we meet on the fields of France;
May the spirit of Grant be over them all
When the sons of the North advance.

Here's to the gray of the sun-kissed South
When we meet on the fields of France;
May the spirit of Lee be over them all
When the sons of the South advance.

And here's to the blue and the gray as one
When we meet on the fields of France;
May the spirit of God be over them all
When the sons of the Flag advance.
—Author Unknown.





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